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First Edition 1887
Second Edition 1890
Third Edition 1896; *Reprinted* 1899
Edition de Luxe 1900
Fourth Edition 1901; *Reprinted* 1903, 1905, 1907, 1909
Library Edition 1910. *Reprinted* 1912

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I

A PRINCE OF COURT PAINTERS

A PRINCE OF COURT PAINTERS

EXTRACTS FROM AN OLD FRENCH JOURNAL

VALENCIENNES, *September* 1701.

THEY have been renovating my father's large workroom. That delightful, tumble-down old place has lost its moss-grown tiles and the green weather-stains we have known all our lives on the high whitewashed wall, opposite which we sit, in the little sculptor's yard, for the coolness, in summertime. Among old Watteau's work-people came his son, "the genius," my father's godson and namesake, a dark-haired youth, whose large, unquiet eyes seemed perpetually wandering to the various drawings which lie exposed here. My father will have it that he is a genius indeed, and a painter born. We have had our September Fair in the *Grande Place*, a wonderful stir of sound and colour in the wide, open space beneath our windows. And just where the crowd was busiest young Antony was found, hoisted into one of those empty niches of the old *Hôtel de Ville*, sketching the scene to the life, but with a

kind of grace—a marvellous tact of omission, as my father pointed out to us, in dealing with the vulgar reality seen from one's own window—which has made trite old Harlequin, Clown, and Columbine, seem like people in some fairyland; or like infinitely clever tragic actors, who, for the humour of the thing, have put on motley for once, and are able to throw a world of serious innuendo into their burlesque looks, with a sort of comedy which shall be but tragedy seen from the other side. He brought his sketch to our house to-day, and I was present when my father questioned him and commended his work. But the lad seemed not greatly pleased, and left untasted the glass of old Malaga which was offered to him. His father will hear nothing of educating him as a painter. Yet he is not ill-to-do, and has lately built himself a new stone house, big and grey and cold. Their old plastered house with the black timbers, in the *Rue des Cardinaux*, was prettier; dating from the time of the Spaniards, and one of the oldest in Valenciennes.

October 1701.

Chiefly through the solicitations of my father, old Watteau has consented to place Antony with a teacher of painting here. I meet him betimes on the way to his lessons, as I return from Mass; for he still works with the masons,

but making the most of late and early hours, of every moment of liberty. And then he has the feast-days, of which there are so many in this old-fashioned place. Ah! such gifts as his, surely, may once in a way make much industry seem worth while. He makes a wonderful progress. And yet, far from being set-up, and too easily pleased with what, after all, comes to him so easily, he has, my father thinks, too little self-approval for ultimate success. He is apt, in truth, to fall out too hastily with himself and what he produces. Yet here also there is the "golden mean." Yes! I could fancy myself offended by a sort of irony which sometimes crosses the half-melancholy sweetness of manner habitual with him; only that as I can see, he treats himself to the same quality.

October 1701.

Antony Watteau comes here often now. It is the instinct of a natural fineness in him, to escape when he can from that blank stone house, with so little to interest, and that homely old man and woman. The rudeness of his home has turned his feeling for even the simpler graces of life into a physical want, like hunger or thirst, which might come to greed; and methinks he perhaps overvalues these things. Still, made as he is, his hard fate in that rude place must needs touch one. And then, he profits by the experience of

my father, who has much knowledge in matters of art beyond his own art of sculpture; and Antony is not unwelcome to him. In these last rainy weeks especially, when he can't sketch out of doors, when the wind only half dries the pavement before another torrent comes, and people stay at home, and the only sound from without is the creaking of a restless shutter on its hinges, or the march across the *Place* of those weary soldiers, coming and going so interminably, one hardly knows whether to or from battle with the English and the Austrians, from victory or defeat:—Well! he has become like one of our family. "He will go far!" my father declares. He would go far, in the literal sense, if he might—to Paris, to Rome. It must be admitted that our Valenciennes is a quiet, nay! a sleepy place; sleepier than ever since it became French, and ceased to be so near the frontier. The grass is growing deep on our old ramparts, and it is pleasant to walk there—to walk there and muse; pleasant for a tame, unambitious soul such as mine.

December 1702.

Antony Watteau left us for Paris this morning. It came upon us quite suddenly. They amuse themselves in Paris. A scene-painter we have here, well known in Flanders, has been engaged to work in one of the Parisian play-houses; and young Watteau, of whom he had some slight

knowledge, has departed in his company. He doesn't know it was I who persuaded the scene-painter to take him ; that he would find the lad useful. We offered him our little presents—fine thread-lace of our own making for his ruffles, and the like ; for one must make a figure in Paris, and he is slim and well-formed. For myself, I presented him with a silken purse I had long ago embroidered for another. Well ! we shall follow his fortunes (of which I for one feel quite sure) at a distance. Old Watteau didn't know of his departure, and has been here in great anger.

December 1703.

Twelve months to-day since Antony went to Paris ! The first struggle must be a sharp one for an unknown lad in that vast, overcrowded place, even if he be as clever as young Antony Watteau. We may think, however, that he is on the way to his chosen end, for he returns not home ; though, in truth, he tells those poor old people very little of himself. The apprentices of the M. Métayer for whom he works, labour all day long, each at a single part only,—*coiffure*, or robe, or hand,—of the cheap pictures of religion or fantasy he exposes for sale at a low price along the footways of the *Pont Notre-Dame*. Antony is already the most skilful of them, and seems to have been promoted of late to work on church pictures. I like the thought of that.

He receives three *livres* a week for his pains, and his soup daily.

May 1705.

Antony Watteau has parted from the dealer in pictures *à bon marché*, and works now with a painter of furniture pieces (those headpieces for doors and the like, now in fashion) who is also *concierge* of the Palace of the Luxembourg. Antony is actually lodged somewhere in that grand place, which contains the king's collection of the Italian pictures he would so willingly copy. Its gardens also are magnificent, with something, as we understand from him, altogether of a novel kind in their disposition and embellishment. Ah ! how I delight myself, in fancy at least, in those beautiful gardens, freer and trimmed less stiffly than those of other royal houses. Methinks I see him there, when his long summer-day's work is over, enjoying the cool shade of the stately, broad-foliaged trees, each of which is a great courtier, though it has its way almost as if it belonged to that open and unbuilt country beyond, over which the sun is sinking.

His thoughts, however, in the midst of all this, are not wholly away from home, if I may judge by the subject of a picture he hopes to sell for as much as sixty *livres*—*Un Départ de Troupes*, Soldiers Departing—one of those scenes of military life one can study so well here at Valenciennes.

June 1705.

Young Watteau has returned home—proof, with a character so independent as his, that things have gone well with him; and (it is agreed!) stays with us, instead of in the stone-mason's house. The old people suppose he comes to us for the sake of my father's instruction. French people as we are become, we are still old Flemish, if not at heart, yet on the surface. Even in *French* Flanders, at Douai and Saint Omer, as I understand, in the churches and in people's houses, as may be seen from the very streets, there is noticeable a minute and scrupulous air of care-taking and neatness. Antony Watteau remarks this more than ever on returning to Valenciennes, and savours greatly, after his lodging in Paris, our Flemish cleanliness, lover as he is of distinction and elegance. Those worldly graces he seemed when a young lad almost to hunger and thirst for, as though truly the mere adornments of life were its necessaries, he already takes as if he had been always used to them. And there is something noble—shall I say?—in his half-disdainful way of serving himself with what he still, as I think, secretly values over-much. There is an air of seemly thought—*le bel sérieux*—about him, which makes me think of one of those grave old Dutch states-men in their youth, such as that famous William the Silent. And yet the effect of this first success

of his (of more importance than its mere money value, as insuring for the future the full play of his natural powers) I can trace like the bloom of a flower upon him; and he has, now and then, the gaieties which from time to time, surely, must refresh all true artists, however hard-working and "painful."

July 1705.

The charm of all this—his physiognomy and manner of being—has touched even my young brother, Jean-Baptiste. He is greatly taken with Antony, clings to him almost too attentively, and will be nothing but a painter, though my father would have trained him to follow his own profession. It may do the child good. He needs the expansion of some generous sympathy or sentiment in that close little soul of his, as I have thought, watching sometimes how his small face and hands are moved in sleep. A child of ten who cares only to save and possess, to hoard his tiny savings! Yet he is not otherwise selfish, and loves us all with a warm heart. Just now it is the moments of Antony's company he counts, like a little miser. Well! that may save him perhaps from developing a certain meanness of character I have sometimes feared for him.

A PRINCE OF COURT PAINTERS

August 1705.

We returned home late this summer evening —Antony Watteau, my father and sisters, young Jean-Baptiste, and myself—from an excursion to Saint-Amand, in celebration of Antony's last day with us. After visiting the great abbey-church and its range of chapels, with their costly encumbrance of carved shrines and golden reliquaries and funeral scutcheons in the coloured glass, half seen through a rich enclosure of marble and brass-work, we supped at the little inn in the forest. Antony, looking well in his new-fashioned, long-skirted coat, and taller than he really is, made us bring our cream and wild strawberries out of doors, ranging ourselves according to his judgment (for a hasty sketch in that big pocket-book he carries) on the soft slope of one of those fresh spaces in the wood, where the trees unclose a little, while Jean-Baptiste and my youngest sister danced a minuet on the grass, to the notes of some strolling lutanist who had found us out. He is visibly cheerful at the thought of his return to Paris, and became for a moment freer and more animated than I have ever yet seen him, as he discoursed to us about the paintings of Peter Paul Rubens in the church here. His words, as he spoke of them, seemed full of a kind of rich sunset with some moving glory within it. Yet I like far better than any of these pictures of Rubens a work of that old Dutch

master, Peter Porbus, which hangs, though almost out of sight indeed, in our church at home. The patron saints, simple, and standing firmly on either side, present two homely old people to Our Lady enthroned in the midst, with the look and attitude of one for whom, amid her "glories" (depicted in dim little circular pictures, set in the openings of a chaplet of pale flowers around her) all feelings are over, except a great pitifulness. Her robe of shadowy blue suits my eyes better far than the hot flesh-tints of the Medicean ladies of the great Peter Paul, in spite of that amplitude and royal ease of action under their stiff court costumes, at which Antony Watteau declares himself in dismay.

August 1705.

I am just returned from early Mass. I lingered long after the office was ended, watching, pondering how in the world one could help a small bird which had flown into the church but could find no way out again. I suspect it will remain there, fluttering round and round distractedly, far up under the arched roof, till it dies exhausted. I seem to have heard of a writer who likened man's life to a bird passing just once only, on some winter night, from window to window, across a cheerfully-lighted hall. The bird, taken captive by the ill-luck of a moment, re-tracing its issueless circle till it

expires within the close vaulting of that great stone church :—human life may be like that bird too !

Antony Watteau returned to Paris yesterday. Yes !—Certainly, great heights of achievement would seem to lie before him ; access to regions whither one may find it increasingly hard to follow him even in imagination, and figure to one's self after what manner his life moves therein.

January 1709.

Antony Watteau has competed for what is called the *Prix de Rome*, desiring greatly to profit by the grand establishment founded at Rome by King Lewis the Fourteenth, for the encouragement of French artists. He obtained only the second place, but does not renounce his desire to make the journey to Italy. Could I save enough by careful economies for that purpose ? It might be conveyed to him in some indirect way that would not offend.

February 1712.

We read, with much pleasure for all of us, in the *Gazette* to-day, among other events of the great world, that Antony Watteau had been elected to the Academy of Painting under the new title of *Peintre des Fêtes Galantes*, and had been named also *Peintre du Roi.* My brother,

Jean-Baptiste, ran to tell the news to old Jean-Philippe and Michelle Watteau.

A new manner of painting! The old furniture of people's rooms must needs be changed throughout, it would seem, to accord with this painting; or rather, the painting is designed exclusively to suit one particular kind of apartment. A manner of painting greatly prized, as we understand, by those Parisian judges who have had the best opportunity of acquainting themselves with whatever is most enjoyable in the arts:—such is the achievement of the young Watteau! He looks to receive more orders for his work than he will be able to execute. He will certainly relish—he, so elegant, so hungry for the colours of life—a free intercourse with those wealthy lovers of the arts, M. de Crozat, M. de Julienne, the Abbé de la Roque, the Count de Caylus, and M. Gersaint, the famous dealer in pictures, who are so anxious to lodge him in their fine *hôtels*, and to have him of their company at their country houses. Paris, we hear, has never been wealthier and more luxurious than now: and the great ladies outbid each other to carry his work upon their very fans. Those vast fortunes, however, seem to change hands very rapidly. And Antony's new manner? I am unable even to divine it—to conceive the trick and effect of it—at all. Only, something of lightness and coquetry I discern there, at variance, methinks,

with his own singular gravity and even sadness of mien and mind, more answerable to the stately apparelling of the age of Henry the Fourth, or of Lewis the Thirteenth, in these old, sombre Spanish houses of ours.

March 1713.

We have all been very happy,—Jean-Baptiste as if in a delightful dream. Antony Watteau, being consulted with regard to the lad's training as a painter, has most generously offered to receive him for his own pupil. My father, for some reason unknown to me, seemed to hesitate at the first; but Jean-Baptiste, whose enthusiasm for Antony visibly refines and beautifies his whole nature, has won the necessary permission, and this dear young brother will leave us to-morrow. Our regrets and his, at his parting from us for the first time, overtook our joy at his good fortune by surprise, at the last moment, just as we were about to bid each other good-night. For a while there had seemed to be an uneasiness under our cheerful talk, as if each one present were concealing something with an effort; and it was Jean-Baptiste himself who gave way at last. And then we sat down again, still together, and allowed free play to what was in our hearts, almost till morning, my sisters weeping much. I know better how to control myself. In a few days that delightful new life will have

begun for him : and I have made him promise to write often to us. With how small a part of my whole life shall I be really living at Valenciennes !

January 1714.

Jean-Philippe Watteau has received a letter from his son to-day. Old Michelle Watteau, whose sight is failing, though she still works (half by touch, indeed) at her pillow-lace, was glad to hear me read the letter aloud more than once. It recounts—how modestly, and almost as a matter of course !—his late successes. And yet !—does he, in writing to these old people, purposely underrate his great good fortune and seeming happiness, not to shock them too much by the contrast between the delicate enjoyments of the life he now leads among the wealthy and refined, and that bald existence of theirs in his old home ? A life, agitated, exigent, unsatisfying ! That is what this letter really discloses, below so attractive a surface. As his gift expands so does that incurable restlessness one supposed but the humour natural to a promising youth who had still everything to do. And now the only realised enjoyment he has of all this might seem to be the thought of the independence it has purchased him, so that he can escape from one lodging-place to another, just as it may please him. He has already deserted, somewhat incontinently, more than one of those

fine houses, the liberal air of which he used so greatly to affect, and which have so readily received him. Has he failed truly to grasp the fact of his great success and the rewards that lie before him? At all events, he seems, after all, not greatly to value that dainty world he is now privileged to enter, and has certainly but little relish for his own works—those works which I for one so thirst to see.

March 1714.

We were all—Jean-Philippe, Michelle Watteau, and ourselves—half in expectation of a visit from Antony; and to-day, quite suddenly, he is with us. I was lingering after early Mass this morning in the church of Saint Vaast. It is good for me to be there. Our people lie under one of the great marble slabs before the *jubé*, some of the memorial brass balusters of which are engraved with their names and the dates of their decease. The settle of carved oak which runs all round the wide nave is my father's own work. The quiet spaciousness of the place is itself like a meditation, an "act of recollection," and clears away the confusions of the heart. I suppose the heavy droning of the *carillon* had smothered the sound of his footsteps, for on my turning round, when I supposed myself alone, Antony Watteau was standing near me. Constant observer as he is of the lights and shadows of things, he visits

places of this kind at odd times. He has left Jean-Baptiste at work in Paris, and will stay this time with the old people, not at our house; though he has spent the better part of to-day in my father's workroom. He hasn't yet put off, in spite of all his late intercourse with the great world, his distant and preoccupied manner—a manner, it is true, the same to every one. It is certainly not through pride in his success, as some might fancy, for he was thus always. It is rather as if, with all that success, life and its daily social routine were somewhat of a burden to him.

April 1714.

At last we shall understand something of that new style of his—the *Watteau* style—so much relished by the fine people at Paris. He has taken it into his kind head to paint and decorate our chief *salon*—the room with the three long windows, which occupies the first floor of the house.

The room was a landmark, as we used to think, an inviolable milestone and landmark, of old Valenciennes fashion—that sombre style, indulging much in contrasts of black or deep brown with white, which the Spaniards left behind them here. Doubtless their eyes had found its shadows cool and pleasant, when they shut themselves in from the cutting sunshine of their own country. But in our country,

where we must needs economise not the shade but the sun, its grandiosity weighs a little on one's spirits. Well! the rough plaster we used to cover as well as might be with morsels of old figured arras-work, is replaced by dainty panelling of wood, with mimic columns, and a quite aerial scrollwork around sunken spaces of a pale-rose stuff and certain oval openings —two over the doors, opening on each side of the great couch which faces the windows, one over the chimney-piece, and one above the buffet which forms its *vis-à-vis*—four spaces in all, to be filled by and by with "fantasies" of the Four Seasons, painted by his own hand. He will send us from Paris arm-chairs of a new pattern he has devised, suitably covered, and a painted *clavecin*. Our old silver candlesticks look well on the chimney-piece. Odd, faint-coloured flowers fill coquettishly the little empty spaces here and there, like ghosts of nosegays left by visitors long ago, which paled thus, sympathetically, at the decease of their old owners; for, in spite of its new-fashionedness, all this array is really less like a new thing than the last surviving result of all the more lightsome adornments of past times. Only, the very walls seem to cry out:—No! to make delicate insinuation, for a music, a conversation, nimbler than any we have known, or are likely to find here. For himself, he converses well, but very sparingly. He assures us, indeed, that the

"new style" is in truth a thing of old days, of his own old days here in Valenciennes, when, working long hours as a mason's boy, he in fancy reclothed the walls of this or that house he was employed in, with this fairy arrangement—itself like a piece of "chamber-music," methinks, part answering to part; while no too trenchant note is allowed to break through the delicate harmony of white and pale red and little golden touches. Yet it is all very comfortable also, it must be confessed; with an elegant open place for the fire, instead of the big old stove of brown tiles. The ancient, heavy furniture of our grandparents goes up, with difficulty, into the garrets, much against my father's inclination. To reconcile him to the change, Antony is painting his portrait in a vast *perruque*, and with more vigorous massing of light and shadow than he is wont to permit himself.

June 1714.

He has completed the ovals:—The Four Seasons. Oh! the summerlike grace, the freedom and softness, of the "Summer"—a hayfield such as we visited to-day, but boundless, and with touches of level Italian architecture in the hot, white, elusive distance, and wreaths of flowers, fairy hayrakes and the like, suspended from tree to tree, with that wonderful lightness which is one of the charms of his

work. I can understand through this, at last, what it is he enjoys, what he selects by preference, from all that various world we pass our lives in. I am struck by the purity of the room he has re-fashioned for us—a sort of *moral* purity; yet, in the *forms* and *colours* of things. Is the actual life of Paris, to which he will soon return, equally pure, that it relishes this kind of thing so strongly? Only, methinks 'tis a pity to incorporate so much of his work, of himself, with objects of use, which must perish by use, or disappear, like our own old furniture, with mere change of fashion.

July 1714.

On the last day of Antony Watteau's visit we made a party to Cambrai. We entered the cathedral church: it was the hour of Vespers, and it happened that *Monseigneur le Prince de Cambrai*, the author of *Télémaque*, was in his place in the choir. He appears to be of great age, assists but rarely at the offices of religion, and is never to be seen in Paris; and Antony had much desired to behold him. Certainly it was worth while to have come so far only to see him, and hear him give his pontifical blessing, in a voice feeble but of infinite sweetness, and with an inexpressibly graceful movement of the hands. A veritable *grand seigneur!* His refined old age, the impress of genius and

honours, even his disappointments, concur with natural graces to make him seem too distinguished (a fitter word fails me) for this world. *Omnia vanitas!* he seems to say, yet with a profound resignation, which makes the things we are most of us so fondly occupied with look petty enough. *Omnia vanitas!* Is that indeed the proper comment on our lives, coming, as it does in this case, from one who might have made his own all that life has to bestow? Yet he was never to be seen at court, and has lived here almost as an exile. Was our "Great King Lewis" jealous of a true *grand seigneur* or *grand monarque* by natural gift and the favour of heaven, that he could not endure his presence?

July 1714.

My own portrait remains unfinished at his sudden departure. I sat for it in a walking-dress, made under his direction—a gown of a peculiar silken stuff, falling into an abundance of small folds, giving me "a certain air of piquancy" which pleases him, but is far enough from my true self. My old Flemish *faille*, which I shall always wear, suits me better.

I notice that our good-hearted but sometimes difficult friend said little of our brother Jean-Baptiste, though he knows us so anxious on his account—spoke only of his constant industry,

cautiously, and not altogether with satisfaction, as if the sight of it wearied him.

September 1714.

Will Antony ever accomplish that long-pondered journey to Italy? For his own sake, I should be glad he might. Yet it seems desolately far, across those great hills and plains. I remember how I formed a plan for providing him with a sum sufficient for the purpose. But that he no longer needs.

With myself, how to get through time becomes sometimes the question,—unavoidably; though it strikes me as a thing unspeakably sad in a life so short as ours. The sullenness of a long wet day is yielding just now to an outburst of watery sunset, which strikes from the far horizon of this quiet world of ours, over fields and willow-woods, upon the shifty weather-vanes and long-pointed windows of the tower on the square—from which the *Angelus* is sounding—with a momentary promise of a fine night. I prefer the *Salut* at Saint Vaast. The walk thither is a longer one, and I have a fancy always that I may meet Antony Watteau there again, any time; just as, when a child, having found one day a tiny box in the shape of a silver coin, for long afterwards I used to try every piece of money that came into my hands, expecting it to open.

September 1714.

We were sitting in the *Watteau* chamber for the coolness, this sultry evening. A sudden gust of wind ruffled the lights in the sconces on the walls: the distant rumblings, which had continued all the afternoon, broke out at last; and through the driving rain, a coach, rattling across the *Place*, stops at our door: in a moment Jean-Baptiste is with us once again; but with bitter tears in his eyes;—dismissed!

October 1714.

Jean-Baptiste! he too, rejected by Antony! It makes our friendship and fraternal sympathy closer. And still as he labours, not less sedulously than of old, and still so full of loyalty to his old master, in that *Watteau* chamber, I seem to see Antony himself, of whom Jean-Baptiste dares not yet speak,—to come very near his work, and understand his great parts. So Jean-Baptiste's work, in its nearness to his, may stand, for the future, as the central interest of my life. I bury myself in that.

February 1715.

If I understand anything of these matters, Antony Watteau paints that delicate life of Paris so excellently, with so much spirit, partly

because, after all, he looks down upon it or despises it. To persuade myself of that, is my womanly satisfaction for his preference—his apparent preference—for a world so different from mine. Those coquetries, those vain and perishable graces, can be rendered so perfectly, only through an intimate understanding of them. For him, to understand must be to despise them; while (I think I know why) he nevertheless undergoes their fascination. Hence that discontent with himself, which keeps pace with his fame. It would have been better for him—he would have enjoyed a purer and more real happiness—had he remained here, obscure; as it might have been better for me!

It is altogether different with Jean-Baptiste. He approaches that life, and all its pretty nothingness, from a level no higher than its own; and beginning just where Antony Watteau leaves off in disdain, produces a solid and veritable likeness of it and of its ways.

March 1715.

There are points in his painting (I apprehend this through his own persistently modest observations) at which he works out his purpose more excellently than Watteau; of whom he has trusted himself to speak at last, with a wonderful self-effacement, pointing out in each of his pictures, for the rest so just and true, how

Antony would have managed this or that, and, with what an easy superiority, have done the thing better—done the impossible.

February 1716.

There are good things, attractive things, in life, meant for one and not for another—not meant perhaps for me; as there are pretty clothes which are not suitable for every one. I find a certain immobility of disposition in me, to quicken or interfere with which is like physical pain. He, so brilliant, petulant, mobile! I am better far beside Jean-Baptiste—in contact with his quiet, even labour, and manner of being. At first he did the work to which he had set himself, sullenly; but the mechanical labour of it has cleared his mind and temper at last, as a sullen day turns quite clear and fine by imperceptible change. With the earliest dawn he enters his workroom, the *Watteau* chamber, where he remains at work all day. The dark evenings he spends in industrious preparation with the *crayon* for the pictures he is to finish during the hours of daylight. His toil is also his amusement: he goes but rarely into the society whose manners he has to re-produce. The animals in his pictures, pet animals, are mere toys: he knows it. But he finishes a large number of works, door-heads, *clavecin* cases, and the like. His happiest, his most genial moments,

he puts, like savings of fine gold, into one particular picture (true *opus magnum*, as he hopes), *The Swing*. He has the secret of surprising effects with a certain pearl-grey silken stuff of his predilection; and it must be confessed that he paints hands—which a draughtsman, of course, should understand at least twice as well as all other people—with surpassing expression.

March 1716.

Is it the depressing result of this labour, of a too exacting labour? I know not. But at times (it is his one melancholy!) he expresses a strange apprehension of poverty, of penury and mean surroundings in old age; reminding me of that childish disposition to hoard, which I noticed in him of old. And then—inglorious Watteau, as he is!—at times that steadiness, in which he is so great a contrast to Antony, as it were accumulates, changes, into a ray of genius, a grace, an inexplicable touch of truth, in which all his heaviness leaves him for a while, and he actually goes beyond the master; as himself protests to me, yet modestly. And still, it is precisely at those moments that he feels most the difference between himself and Antony Watteau. "In *that* country, *all* the pebbles are golden nuggets," he says; with perfect good-humour.

June 1716.

'Tis truly in a delightful abode that Antony Watteau is just now lodged—the *hôtel*, or town-house of M. de Crozat, which is not only a comfortable dwelling-place, but also a precious museum lucky people go far to see. Jean-Baptiste, too, has seen the place, and describes it. The antiquities, beautiful curiosities of all sorts—above all, the original drawings of those old masters Antony so greatly admires—are arranged all around one there, that the influence, the genius, of those things may imperceptibly play upon and enter into one, and form what one does. The house is situated near the *Rue Richelieu*, but has a large garden about it. M. de Crozat gives his musical parties there, and Antony Watteau has painted the walls of one of the apartments with the Four Seasons, after the manner of ours, but doubtless improved by second thoughts. This beautiful place is now Antony's home for a while. The house has but one story, with attics in the *mansard* roofs, like those of a farmhouse in the country. I fancy Antony fled thither for a few moments, from the visitors who weary him; breathing the freshness of that dewy garden in the very midst of Paris. As for me, I suffocate this summer afternoon in this pretty *Watteau* chamber of ours, where Jean-Baptiste is at work so contentedly.

May 1717.

In spite of all that happened, Jean-Baptiste has been looking forward to a visit to Valenciennes which Antony Watteau had proposed to make. He hopes always—has a patient hope—that Anthony's former patronage of him may be revived. And now he is among us, actually at his work—restless and disquieting, meagre, like a woman with some nervous malady. Is it pity, then, pity only, one must feel for the brilliant one? He has been criticising the work of Jean-Baptiste, who takes his judgments generously, gratefully. Can it be that, after all, he despises and is no true lover of his own art, and is but chilled by an enthusiasm for it in another, such as that of Jean-Baptiste? as if Jean-Baptiste over-valued it, or as if some ignobleness or blunder, some sign that he has really missed his aim, started into sight from his work at the sound of praise—as if such praise could hardly be altogether sincere.

June 1717.

And at last one has actual sight of his work—what it is. He has brought with him certain long-cherished designs to finish here in quiet, as he protests he has never finished before. That charming *Noblesse*—can it be really so distinguished to the minutest point, so naturally

aristocratic? Half in masquerade, playing the drawing-room or garden comedy of life, these persons have upon them, not less than the landscape he composes, and among the accidents of which they group themselves with such a perfect fittingness, a certain light we should seek for in vain upon anything real. For their framework they have around them a veritable architecture—a tree-architecture—to which those moss-grown balusters, *termes*, statues, fountains, are really but accessories. Only, as I gaze upon those windless afternoons, I find myself always saying to myself involuntarily, "The evening will be a wet one." The storm is always brooding through the massy splendour of the trees, above those sun-dried glades or lawns, where delicate children may be trusted thinly clad; and the secular trees themselves will hardly outlast another generation.

July 1717.

There has been an exhibition of his pictures in the Hall of the Academy of Saint Luke; and all the world has been to see.

Yes! Besides that unreal, imaginary light upon these scenes, these persons, which is pure gift of his, there was a light, a poetry, in those persons and things themselves, close at hand *we* had not seen. He has enabled us to see it: we are so much the better-off thereby, and I, for

one, the better. The world he sets before us so engagingly has its care for purity, its cleanly preferences, in what one is to *see*—in the outsides of things—and there is something, a sign, a memento, at the least, of what makes life really valuable, even in that. There, is my simple notion, wholly womanly perhaps, but which I may hold by, of the purpose of the arts.

August 1717.

And yet! (to read my mind, my experience, in somewhat different terms) methinks Antony Watteau reproduces that gallant world, those patched and powdered ladies and fine cavaliers, so much to its own satisfaction, partly because he despises it; if this be a possible condition of excellent artistic production. People talk of a new era now dawning upon the world, of fraternity, liberty, humanity, of a novel sort of social freedom in which men's natural goodness of heart will blossom at a thousand points hitherto repressed, of wars disappearing from the world in an infinite, benevolent ease of life —yes! perhaps of infinite littleness also. And it is the outward manner of that, which, partly by anticipation, and through pure intellectual power, Antony Watteau has caught, together with a flattering something of his own, added thereto. Himself really of the old time—that serious old time which is passing away, the impress of which he carries on his physiognomy

—he dignifies, by what in him is neither more nor less than a profound melancholy, the essential insignificance of what he *wills* to touch in all that, transforming its mere pettiness into grace. It looks certainly very graceful, fresh animated, "piquant," as they love to say—yes! and withal, I repeat, perfectly pure, and may well congratulate itself on the loan of a fallacious grace, not its own. For in truth Antony Watteau is still the mason's boy, and deals with that world under a fascination, of the nature of which he is half-conscious methinks, puzzled at "the queer trick he possesses," to use his own phrase. You see him growing ever more and more meagre, as he goes through the world and its applause. Yet he reaches with wonderful sagacity the secret of an adjustment of colours, a *coiffure*, a toilette, setting I know not what air of real superiority on such things. He will never overcome his early training; and these light things will possess for him always a kind of representative or borrowed worth, as characterising that impossible or forbidden world which the mason's boy saw through the closed gateways of the enchanted garden. Those trifling and petty graces, the *insignia* to him of that nobler world of aspiration and idea, even now that he is aware, as I conceive, of their true littleness, bring back to him, by the power of association, all the old magical exhilaration of his dream—his dream of a better world than

the real one. There, is the formula, as I apprehend, of his success—of his extraordinary hold on things so alien from himself. And I think there is more real hilarity in my brother's *fêtes champêtres*—more truth to life, and therefore less distinction. Yes! the world profits by such reflection of its poor, coarse self, in one who renders all its caprices from the height of a Corneille. That is my way of making up to myself for the fact that I think *his* days, too, would have been really happier, had he remained obscure at Valenciennes.

September 1717.

My own poor likeness, begun so long ago, still remains unfinished on the easel, at his departure from Valenciennes—perhaps for ever; since the old people departed this life in the hard winter of last year, at no distant time from each other. It is pleasanter to him to sketch and plan than to paint and finish; and he is often out of humour with himself because he cannot project into a picture the life and spirit of his first thought with the *crayon*. He would fain begin where that famous master Gerard Dow left off, and snatch, as it were with a single stroke, what in him was the result of infinite patience. It is the sign of this sort of promptitude that he values solely in the work of another. To my thinking there is a

kind of greed or grasping in that humour ; as if things were not to last very long, and one must snatch opportunity. And often he succeeds. The old Dutch painter cherished with a kind of piety his colours and pencils. Antony Watteau, on the contrary, will hardly make any preparations for his work at all, or even clean his palette, in the dead-set he makes at improvisation. 'Tis the contrast perhaps between the staid Dutch genius and the petulant, sparkling French temper of this new era, into which he has thrown himself. Alas! it is already apparent that the result also loses something of longevity, of durability—the colours fading or changing, from the first, somewhat rapidly, as Jean-Baptiste notes. 'Tis true, a mere trifle alters or produces the expression. But then, on the other hand, in pictures the whole effect of which lies in a kind of harmony, the treachery of a single colour must needs involve the failure of the whole to outlast the fleeting grace of those social conjunctions it is meant to perpetuate. This is what has happened, in part, to that portrait on the easel. Meantime, he has commanded Jean-Baptiste to finish it ; and so it must be.

October 1717.

Anthony Watteau is an excellent judge of literature, and I have been reading (with infinite

surprise!) in my afternoon walks in the little wood here, a new book he left behind him—a great favourite of his; as it has been a favourite with large numbers in Paris.[1] Those pathetic shocks of fortune, those sudden alternations of pleasure and remorse, which must always lie among the very conditions of an irregular and guilty love, as in sinful games of chance:—they have begun to talk of these things in Paris, to amuse themselves with the spectacle of them, set forth here, in the story of poor Manon Lescaut—for whom fidelity is impossible, so vulgarly eager for the money which can buy pleasures such as hers—with an art like Watteau's own, for lightness and grace. Incapacity of truth, yet with such tenderness, such a gift of tears, on the one side: on the other, a faith so absolute as to give to an illicit love almost the regularity of marriage! And this is the book those fine ladies in Watteau's "conversations," who look so exquisitely pure, lay down on the cushion when the children run up to have their laces righted. Yet the pity of it! What floods of weeping! There is a tone about it which strikes me as going well with the grace of these leafless birch-trees against the sky, the pale silver of their bark, and a certain delicate odour of decay which rises from the soil. It is all one half-light; and the heroine, nay! the

[1] Possibly written at this date, but almost certainly not printed till many years later.—*Note in Second Edition.*

hero himself also, that dainty Chevalier des Grieux, with all his fervour, have, I think, but a half-life in them truly, from the first. And I could fancy myself almost of their condition sitting here alone this evening, in which a premature touch of winter makes the world look but an inhospitable place of entertainment for one's spirit. With so little genial warmth to hold it there, one feels that the merest accident might detach that flighty guest altogether. So chilled at heart things seem to me, as I gaze on that glacial point in the motionless sky, like some mortal spot whence death begins to creep over the body !

And yet, in the midst of this, by mere force of contrast, comes back to me, very vividly, the true colour, ruddy with blossom and fruit, of the past summer, among the streets and gardens of some of our old towns we visited ; when the thought of cold was a luxury, and the earth dry enough to sleep on. The summer was indeed a fine one ; and the whole country seemed bewitched. A kind of infectious sentiment passed upon us, like an efflux from its flowers and flower-like architecture—flower-like to me at least, but of which I never felt the beauty before.

And as I think of that, certainly I have to confess that there is a wonderful reality about this lovers' story ; an accordance between themselves and the conditions of things around them, so deep as to make it seem that the course of

their lives could hardly have been other than it was. That impression comes, perhaps, wholly of the writer's skill ; but, at all events, I must read the book no more.

June 1718.

And he has allowed that Mademoiselle Rosalba—"*ce bel esprit*"—who can discourse upon the arts like a master, to paint his portrait : has painted hers in return ! She holds a lapful of white roses with her two hands. *Rosa Alba* —himself has inscribed it ! It will be engraved, to circulate and perpetuate it the better.

One's journal, here in one's solitude, is of service at least in this, that it affords an escape for vain regrets, angers, impatience. One puts this and that angry spasm into it, and is delivered from it so.

And then, it was at the desire of M. de Crozat that the thing was done. One must oblige one's patrons. The lady also, they tell me, is consumptive, like Antony himself, and like to die. And he, who has always lacked either the money or the spirits to make that long-pondered, much-desired journey to Italy, has found in her work the veritable accent and colour of those old Venetian masters he would so willingly have studied under the sunshine of their own land. Alas ! How little peace have his great successes given him ; how little of

that quietude of mind, without which, methinks, one fails in true dignity of character.

November 1718.

His thirst for change of place has actually driven him to England, that veritable home of the consumptive. Ah me! I feel it may be the finishing stroke. To have run into the native country of consumption! Strange caprice of that desire to travel, which he has really indulged so little in his life—of the restlessness which, they tell me, is itself a symptom of this terrible disease!

January 1720.

As once before, after long silence, a token has reached us, a slight token that he remembers—an etched plate, one of very few he has executed, with that old subject: *Soldiers on the March.* And the weary soldier himself is returning once more to Valenciennes, on his way from England to Paris.

February 1720.

Those sharply-arched brows, those restless eyes which seem larger than ever—something that seizes on one, and is almost terrible, in his expression—speak clearly, and irresistibly set one on the thought of a summing-up of his life.

I am reminded of the day when, already with that air of seemly thought, *le bel sérieux*, he was found sketching, with so much truth to the inmost mind in them, those picturesque mountebanks at the Fair in the *Grande Place;* and I find, throughout his course of life, something of the essential melancholy of the comedian. He, so fastidious and cold, and who has never "ventured the representation of passion," does but amuse the gay world; and is aware of that, though certainly unamused himself all the while. Just now, however, he is finishing a very different picture—that too, full of humour—an English family-group, with a little girl riding a wooden horse: the father, and the mother holding his tobacco-pipe, stand in the centre.

March 1720.

To-morrow he will depart finally. And this evening the Syndics of the Academy of Saint Luke came with their scarves and banners to conduct their illustrious fellow-citizen, by torchlight, to supper in their Guildhall, where all their beautiful old corporation plate will be displayed. The *Watteau salon* was lighted up to receive them. There is something in the payment of great honours to the living which fills one with apprehension, especially when the recipient of them looks so like a dying man. God have mercy on him!

April 1721.

We were on the point of retiring to rest last evening when a messenger arrived post-haste with a letter on behalf of Antony Watteau, desiring Jean-Baptiste's presence at Paris. We did not go to bed that night; and my brother was on his way before daylight, his heart full of a strange conflict of joy and apprehension.

May 1721.

A letter at last! from Jean-Baptiste, occupied with cares of all sorts at the bedside of the sufferer. Antony fancying that the air of the country might do him good, the Abbé Haranger, one of the canons of the Church of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois, where he was in the habit of hearing Mass, has lent him a house at Nogent-sur-Marne. There he receives a few visitors. But in truth the places he once liked best, the people, nay! the very friends, have become to him nothing less than insupportable. Though he still dreams of change, and would fain try his native air once more, he is at work constantly upon his art; but solely by way of a teacher, instructing (with a kind of remorseful diligence, it would seem) Jean-Baptiste, who will be heir to his unfinished work, and take up many of his pictures where he has left them. He seems now anxious

for one thing only, to give his old "dismissed" disciple what remains of himself, and the last secrets of his genius. His property — 9000 livres only — goes to his relations. Jean-Baptiste has found these last weeks immeasurably useful.

For the rest, bodily exhaustion perhaps, and this new interest in an old friend, have brought him tranquillity at last, a tranquillity in which he is much occupied with matters of religion. Ah! it was ever so with me. And one *lives* also most reasonably so.—With women, at least, it is thus, quite certainly. Yet I know not what there is of a pity which strikes deep, at the thought of a man, a while since so strong, turning his face to the wall from the things which most occupy men's lives. 'Tis that homely, but honest *curé* of Nogent he has caricatured so often, who attends him.

July 1721.

Our incomparable Watteau is no more! Jean-Baptiste returned unexpectedly. I heard his hasty footstep on the stairs. We turned together into that room; and he told his story there. Antony Watteau departed suddenly, in the arms of M. Gersaint, on one of the late hot days of July. At the last moment he had been at work upon a crucifix for the good *curé* of Nogent, liking little the very rude one he

possessed. He died with all the sentiments of religion.

He has been a sick man all his life. He was always a seeker after something in the world that is there in no satisfying measure, or not at all.

II

DENYS L'AUXERROIS

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Almost every people, as we know, has had its legend of a "golden age" and of its return—legends which will hardly be forgotten, however prosaic the world may become, while man himself remains the aspiring, never quite contented being he is. And yet in truth, since we are no longer children, we might well question the advantage of the return to us of a condition of life in which, by the nature of the case, the values of things would, so to speak, lie wholly on their surfaces, unless we could regain also the childish consciousness, or rather unconsciousness, in ourselves, to take all that adroitly and with the appropriate lightness of heart. The dream, however, has been left for the most part in the usual vagueness of dreams: in their waking hours people have been too busy to furnish it forth with details. What follows is a quaint legend, with detail enough, of such a return of a golden or poetically-gilded age (a denizen of old Greece itself actually finding his way back again among men) as it happened in an ancient town of medieval France.

Of the French town, properly so called, in which the products of successive ages, not without lively touches of the present, are blended together harmoniously, with a beauty *specific* —a beauty cisalpine and northern, yet at the same time quite distinct from the massive German picturesque of Ulm, or Freiburg, or Augsburg, and of which Turner has found the ideal in certain of his studies of the rivers of France, a perfectly happy conjunction of river and town being of the essence of its physiognomy — the town of Auxerre is perhaps the most complete realisation to be found by the actual wanderer. Certainly, for picturesque expression it is the most memorable of a distinguished group of three in these parts,— Auxerre, Sens, Troyes,—each gathered, as if with deliberate aim at such effect, about the central mass of a huge grey cathedral.

Around Troyes the natural picturesque is to be sought only in the rich, almost coarse, summer colouring of the Champagne country, of which the very tiles, the plaster and brickwork of its tiny villages and great, straggling, village-like farms have caught the warmth. The cathedral, visible far and wide over the fields seemingly of loose wild-flowers, itself a rich mixture of all the varieties of the Pointed style down to the latest *Flamboyant*, may be noticed among the greater French churches for breadth of proportions internally, and is famous

for its almost unrivalled treasure of stained glass, chiefly of a florid, elaborate, later type, with much highly conscious artistic contrivance in design as well as in colour. In one of the richest of its windows, for instance, certain lines of pearly white run hither and thither, with delightful distant effect, upon ruby and dark blue. Approaching nearer you find it to be a Travellers' window, and those odd lines of white the long walking-staves in the hands of Abraham, Raphael, the Magi, and the other saintly patrons of journeys. The appropriate provincial character of the *bourgeoisie* of Champagne is still to be seen, it would appear, among the citizens of Troyes. Its streets, for the most part in timber and pargeting, present more than one unaltered specimen of the ancient *hôtel* or town-house, with forecourt and garden in the rear ; and its more devout citizens would seem even in their church-building to have sought chiefly to please the eyes of those occupied with mundane affairs and out of doors, for they have finished, with abundant outlay, only the vast, useless portals of their parish churches, of surprising height and lightness, in a kind of wildly elegant Gothic-on-stilts, giving to the streets of Troyes a peculiar air of the grotesque, as if in some quaint nightmare of the Middle Age.

At Sens, thirty miles away to the west, a place of far graver aspect, the name of Jean

Cousin denotes a more chastened temper, even in these sumptuous decorations. Here all is cool and composed, with an almost English austerity. The first growth of the Pointed style in England—the hard "early English" of Canterbury — is indeed the creation of William, a master reared in the architectural school of Sens ; and the severity of his taste might seem to have acted as a restraining power on all the subsequent changes of manner in this place—changes in themselves for the most part towards luxuriance. In harmony with the atmosphere of its great church is the cleanly quiet of the town, kept fresh by little channels of clear water circulating through its streets, derivatives of the rapid Vanne which falls just below into the Yonne. The Yonne, bending gracefully, link after link, through a never-ending rustle of poplar trees, beneath lowly vine-clad hills, with relics of delicate woodland here and there, sometimes close at hand, sometimes leaving an interval of broad meadow, has all the lightsome characteristics of French river-side scenery on a smaller scale than usual, and might pass for the child's fancy of a river, like the rivers of the old miniature-painters, blue, and full to a fair green margin. One notices along its course a greater proportion than elsewhere of still untouched old seignorial residences, larger or smaller. The range of old gibbous towns along its banks, expanding their gay quays upon the water-side,

have a common character—Joigny, Villeneuve, Saint Julien-du-Sault—yet tempt us to tarry at each and examine its relics, old glass and the like, of the Renaissance or the Middle Age, for the acquisition of real though minor lessons on the various arts which have left themselves a central monument at Auxerre.—Auxerre! A slight ascent in the winding road! and you have before you the prettiest town in France—the broad framework of vineyard sloping upwards gently to the horizon, with distant white cottages inviting one to walk: the quiet curve of river below, with all the river-side details: the three great purple-tiled masses of Saint Germain, Saint Pierre, and the cathedral of Saint Étienne, rising out of the crowded houses with more than the usual abruptness and irregularity of French building. Here, that rare artist, the susceptible painter of architecture, if he understands the value alike of line and mass of broad masses and delicate lines, has "a subject made to his hand."

A veritable country of the vine, it presents nevertheless an expression peaceful rather than radiant. Perfect type of that happy mean between northern earnestness and the luxury of the south, for which we prize midland France, its physiognomy is not quite happy—attractive in part for its melancholy. Its most characteristic atmosphere is to be seen when the tide of light and distant cloud is travelling quickly

over it, when rain is not far off, and every touch of art or of time on its old building is defined in clear grey. A fine summer ripens its grapes into a valuable wine; but in spite of that it seems always longing for a larger and more continuous allowance of the sunshine which is so much to its taste. You might fancy something querulous or plaintive in that rustling movement of the vine-leaves, as blue-frocked Jacques Bonhomme finishes his day's labour among them.

To beguile one such afternoon when the rain set in early and walking was impossible, I found my way to the shop of an old dealer in *bric-à-brac*. It was not a monotonous display, after the manner of the Parisian dealer, of a stock-in-trade the like of which one has seen many times over, but a discriminate collection of real curiosities. One seemed to recognise a provincial school of taste in various relics of the housekeeping of the last century, with many a gem of earlier times from the old churches and religious houses of the neighbourhood. Among them was a large and brilliant fragment of stained glass which might have come from the cathedral itself. Of the very finest quality in colour and design, it presented a figure not exactly conformable to any recognised ecclesiastical type; and it was clearly part of a series. On my eager inquiry for the remainder, the old man replied that no more of it was

known, but added that the priest of a neighbouring village was the possessor of an entire set of tapestries, apparently intended for suspension in church, and designed to portray the whole subject of which the figure in the stained glass was a portion.

Next afternoon accordingly I repaired to the priest's house, in reality a little Gothic building, part perhaps of an ancient manor-house, close to the village church. In the front garden, flower-garden and *potager* in one, the bees were busy among the autumn growths—many-coloured asters, bignonias, scarlet-beans, and the old-fashioned parsonage flowers. The courteous owner readily showed me his tapestries, some of which hung on the walls of his parlour and staircase by way of a background for the display of the other curiosities of which he was a collector. Certainly, those tapestries and the stained glass dealt with the same theme. In both were the same musical instruments—pipes, cymbals, long reed-like trumpets. The story, indeed, included the building of an organ, just such an instrument, only on a larger scale, as was standing in the old priest's library, though almost soundless now, whereas in certain of the woven pictures the hearers appear as if transported, some of them shouting rapturously to the organ music. A sort of mad vehemence prevails, indeed, throughout the delicate bewilderments of the whole series—

giddy dances, wild animals leaping, above all perpetual wreathings of the vine, connecting, like some mazy arabesque, the various presentations of one oft-repeated figure, translated here out of the clear-coloured glass into the sadder, somewhat opaque and earthen hues of the silken threads. The figure was that of the organ-builder himself, a flaxen and flowery creature, sometimes wellnigh naked among the vine-leaves, sometimes muffled in skins against the cold, sometimes in the dress of a monk, but always with a strong impress of real character and incident from the veritable streets of Auxerre. What is it? Certainly, notwithstanding its grace, and wealth of graceful accessories, a suffering, tortured figure. With all the regular beauty of a pagan god, he has suffered after a manner of which we must suppose pagan gods incapable. It was as if one of those fair, triumphant beings had cast in his lot with the creatures of an age later than his own, people of larger spiritual capacity and assuredly of a larger capacity for melancholy. With this fancy in my mind, by the help of certain notes, which lay in the priest's curious library, upon the history of the works at the cathedral during the period of its finishing, and in repeated examination of the old tapestried designs, the story shaped itself at last.

Towards the middle of the thirteenth century

the cathedral of Saint Étienne was complete in its main outlines: what remained was the building of the great tower, and all that various labour of final decoration which it would take more than one generation to accomplish. Certain circumstances, however, not wholly explained, led to a somewhat rapid finishing, as it were out of hand, yet with a marvellous fulness at once and grace. Of the result much has perished, or been transferred elsewhere; a portion is still visible in sumptuous relics of stained windows, and, above all, in the reliefs which adorn the western portals, very delicately carved in a fine, firm stone from Tonnerre, of which time has only browned the surface, and which, for early mastery in art, may be compared with the contemporary work of Italy. They come nearer than the art of that age was used to do to the expression of life; with a feeling for reality, in no ignoble form, caught, it might seem, from the ardent and full-veined existence then current in these actual streets and houses. Just then Auxerre had its turn in that political movement which broke out sympathetically, first in one, then in another of the towns of France, turning their narrow, feudal institutions into a free, communistic life—a movement of which those great centres of popular devotion, the French cathedrals, are in many instances the monument. Closely connected always with the assertion of individual freedom, alike in

mind and manners, at Auxerre this political stir was associated also, as cause or effect, with the figure and character of a particular personage, long remembered. He was the very genius, it would appear, of that new, free, generous manner in art, active and potent as a living creature.

As the most skilful of the band of carvers worked there one day, with a labour he could never quite make equal to the vision within him, a finely-sculptured Greek coffin of stone, which had been made to serve for some later Roman funeral, was unearthed by the masons. Here, it might seem, the thing was indeed done, and art achieved, as far as regards those final graces, and harmonies of execution, which were precisely what lay beyond the hand of the medieval workman, who for his part had largely at command a seriousness of conception lacking in the old Greek. Within the coffin lay an object of a fresh and brilliant clearness among the ashes of the dead—a flask of lively green glass, like a great emerald. It might have been "the wondrous vessel of the Grail." Only, this object seemed to bring back no ineffable purity, but rather the riotous and earthy heat of old paganism itself. Coated within, and, as some were persuaded, still redolent with the tawny sediment of the Roman wine it had held so long ago, it was set aside for use at the supper which was shortly to celebrate the completion of the masons' work.

Amid much talk of the great age of gold, and some random expressions of hope that it might return again, fine old wine of Auxerre was sipped in small glasses from the precious flask as supper ended. And, whether or not the opening of the buried vessel had anything to do with it, from that time a sort of golden age seemed indeed to be reigning there for a while, and the triumphant completion of the great church was contemporary with a series of remarkable wine seasons. The vintage of those years was long remembered. Fine and abundant wine was to be found stored up even in poor men's cottages; while a new beauty, a gaiety, was abroad, as all the conjoint arts branched out exuberantly in a reign of quiet, delighted labour, at the prompting, as it seemed, of the singular being who came suddenly and oddly to Auxerre to be the centre of so pleasant a period, though in truth he made but a sad ending.

A peculiar usage long perpetuated itself at Auxerre. On Easter Day the canons, in the very centre of the great church, played solemnly at ball. Vespers being sung, instead of conducting the bishop to his palace, they proceeded in order into the nave, the people standing in two long rows to watch. Girding up their skirts a little way, the whole body of clerics awaited their turn in silence, while the captain of the singing-boys cast the ball into the air, as

high as he might, along the vaulted roof of the central aisle to be caught by any boy who could, and tossed again with hand or foot till it passed on to the portly chanters, the chaplains, the canons themselves, who finally played out the game with all the decorum of an ecclesiastical ceremony. It was just then, just as the canons took the ball to themselves so gravely, that Denys—Denys l'Auxerrois, as he was afterwards called—appeared for the first time. Leaping in among the timid children, he made the thing really a game. The boys played like boys, the men almost like madmen, and all with a delightful glee which became contagious, first in the clerical body, and then among the spectators. The aged Dean of the Chapter, Protonotary of his Holiness, held up his purple skirt a little higher, and stepping from the ranks with an amazing levity, as if suddenly relieved of his burden of eighty years, tossed the ball with his foot to the venerable capitular Homilist, equal to the occasion. And then, unable to stand inactive any longer, the laity carried on the game among themselves, with shouts of not too boisterous amusement; the sport continuing till the flight of the ball could no longer be traced along the dusky aisles.

Though the home of his childhood was but a humble one—one of those little cliff-houses cut out in the low chalky hillside, such as are

still to be found with inhabitants in certain districts of France—there were some who connected his birth with the story of a beautiful country girl, who, about eighteen years before, had been taken from her own people, not unwillingly, for the pleasure of the Count of Auxerre. She had wished indeed to see the great lord, who had sought her privately, in the glory of his own house; but, terrified by the strange splendours of her new abode and manner of life, and the anger of the true wife, she had fled suddenly from the place during the confusion of a violent storm, and in her flight given birth prematurely to a child. The child, a singularly fair one, was found alive, but the mother dead, by lightning-stroke as it seemed, not far from her lord's chamber-door, under the shelter of a ruined ivy-clad tower. Denys himself certainly was a joyous lad enough. At the cliff-side cottage, nestling actually beneath the vineyards, he came to be an unrivalled gardener, and, grown to manhood, brought his produce to market, keeping a stall in the great cathedral square for the sale of melons and pomegranates, all manner of seeds and flowers (*omnia speciosa camporum*), honey also, wax tapers, sweetmeats hot from the frying-pan, rough home-made pots and pans from the little pottery in the wood, loaves baked by the aged woman in whose house he lived. On that Easter Day he had entered the

great church for the first time, for the purpose of seeing the game.

And from the very first, the women who saw him at his business, or watering his plants in the cool of the evening, idled for him. The men who noticed the crowd of women at his stall, and how even fresh young girls from the country, seeing him for the first time, always loitered there, suspected—who could tell what kind of powers? hidden under the white veil of that youthful form; and pausing to ponder the matter, found themselves also fallen into the snare. The sight of him made old people feel young again. Even the sage monk Hermes, devoted to study and experiment, was unable to keep the fruit-seller out of his mind, and would fain have discovered the secret of his charm, partly for the friendly purpose of explaining to the lad himself his perhaps more than natural gifts with a view to their profitable cultivation.

It was a period, as older men took note, of young men and their influence. They took fire, no one could quite explain how, as if at his presence, and asserted a wonderful amount of volition, of insolence, yet as if with the consent of their elders, who would themselves sometimes lose their balance, a little comically. That revolution in the temper and manner of individuals concurred with the movement then on foot at Auxerre, as in other French towns,

for the liberation of the *commune* from its old feudal superiors. Denys they called *Frank*, among many other nicknames. Young lords prided themselves on saying that labour should have its ease, and were almost prepared to take freedom, plebeian freedom (of course duly decorated, at least with wild-flowers) for a bride. For in truth Denys at his stall was turning the grave, slow movement of politic heads into a wild social license, which for a while made life like a stage-play. He first led those long processions, through which by and by "the little people," the discontented, the despairing, would utter their minds. One man engaged with another in talk in the market-place; a new influence came forth at the contact; another and then another adhered; at last a new spirit was abroad everywhere. The hot nights were noisy with swarming troops of dishevelled women and youths with red-stained limbs and faces, carrying their lighted torches over the vine-clad hills, or rushing down the streets, to the horror of timid watchers, towards the cool spaces by the river. A shrill music, a laughter at all things, was everywhere. And the new spirit repaired even to church to take part in the novel offices of the Feast of Fools. Heads flung back in ecstasy — the morning sleep among the vines, when the fatigue of the night was over — dew-drenched garments — the serf lying at his ease at last: the artists, then so

numerous at the place, caught what they could, something, at least, of the richness, the flexibility of the visible aspects of life, from all this. With them the life of seeming idleness, to which Denys was conducting the youth of Auxerre so pleasantly, counted but as the cultivation, for their due service to man, of delightful natural things. And the powers of nature concurred. It seemed there would be winter no more. The planet Mars drew nearer to the earth than usual, hanging in the low sky like a fiery red lamp. A massive but well-nigh lifeless vine on the wall of the cloister, allowed to remain there only as a curiosity on account of its immense age, in that *great* season, as it was long after called, clothed itself with fruit once more. The culture of the grape greatly increased. The sunlight fell for the first time on many a spot of deep woodland cleared for vine-growing; though Denys, a lover of trees, was careful to leave a stately specimen of forest growth here and there.

When his troubles came, one characteristic that had seemed most amiable in his prosperity was turned against him—a fondness for oddly grown or even misshapen, yet potentially happy, children; for odd animals also: he sympathised with them all, was skilful in healing their maladies, saved the hare in the chase, and sold his mantle to redeem a lamb from the butcher. He taught the people not to be

afraid of the strange, ugly creatures which the light of the moving torches drew from their hiding-places, nor think it a bad omen that they approached. He tamed a veritable wolf to keep him company like a dog. It was the first of many ambiguous circumstances about him, from which, in the minds of an increasing number of people, a deep suspicion and hatred began to define itself. The rich *bestiary*, then compiling in the library of the great church, became, through his assistance, nothing less than a garden of Eden—the garden of Eden grown wild. The owl alone he abhorred. A little later, almost as if in revenge, alone of all animals it clung to him, haunting him persistently among the dusky stone towers, when grown gentler than ever he dared not kill it. He moved unhurt in the famous *ménagerie* of the castle, of which the common people were so much afraid, and let out the lions, themselves timid prisoners enough, through the streets during the fair. The incident suggested to the somewhat barren penmen of the day a "morality" adapted from the old pagan books—a stage-play in which the God of Wine should return in triumph from the East. In the cathedral square the pageant was presented, amid an intolerable noise of every kind of pipe-music, with Denys in the chief part, upon a gaily-painted chariot, in soft silken raiment, and, for

headdress, a strange elephant-scalp with gilded tusks.

And that unrivalled fairness and freshness of aspect :—how did he alone preserve it untouched, through the wind and heat? In truth, it was not by magic, as some said, but by a natural simplicity in his living. When that dark season of his troubles arrived he was heard begging querulously one wintry night, "Give me wine, meat; dark wine and brown meat!"—come back to the rude door of his old home in the cliff-side. Till that time the great vine-dresser himself drank only water; he had lived on spring-water and fruit. A lover of fertility in all its forms, in what did but suggest it, he was curious and penetrative concerning the habits of water, and had the secret of the divining-rod. Long before it came he could detect the scent of rain from afar, and would climb with delight to the great scaffolding on the unfinished tower to watch its coming over the thirsty vine-land, till it rattled on the great tiled roof of the church below; and then, throwing off his mantle, allow it to bathe his limbs freely, clinging firmly against the tempestuous wind among the carved imageries of dark stone.

It was on his sudden return after a long journey (one of many inexplicable disappearances), coming back changed somewhat, that he ate flesh for the first time, tearing the hot, red morsels with his delicate fingers in a kind of

wild greed. He had fled to the south from the first forbidding days of a hard winter which came at last. At the great seaport of Marseilles he had trafficked with sailors from all parts of the world, from Arabia and India, and bought their wares, exposed now for sale, to the wonder of all, at the Easter fair—richer wines and incense than had been known in Auxerre, seeds of marvellous new flowers, creatures wild and tame, new pottery painted in raw gaudy tints, the skins of animals, meats fried with unheard-of condiments. His stall formed a strange, unwonted patch of colour, found suddenly displayed in the hot morning.

The artists were more delighted than ever, and frequented his company in the little manorial habitation, deserted long since by its owners and haunted, so that the eyes of many looked evil upon it, where he had taken up his abode, attracted, in the first instance, by its rich though neglected garden, a tangle of every kind of creeping, vine-like plant. Here, surrounded in abundance by the pleasant materials of his trade, the vine-dresser as it were turned pedant and kept school for the various artists, who learned here an art supplementary to their own, —that gay magic, namely (art or trick) of his existence, till they found themselves grown into a kind of aristocracy, like veritable *gens fleur-de-lisés*, as they worked together for the decoration of the great church and a hundred other

places beside. And yet a darkness had grown upon him. The kind creature had lost something of his gentleness. Strange motiveless misdeeds had happened; and, at a loss for other causes, not the envious only would fain have traced the blame to Denys. He was making the younger world mad. Would he make himself Count of Auxerre? The lady Ariane, deserted by her former lover, had looked kindly upon him; was ready to make him son-in-law to the old count her father, old and not long for this world. The wise monk Hermes bethought him of certain old readings in which the Wine-god, whose part Denys had played so well, had his contrast, his dark or antipathetic side; was like a double creature, of two natures, difficult or impossible to harmonise. And in truth the much-prized wine of Auxerre has itself but a fugitive charm, being apt to sicken and turn gross long before the bottle is empty, however carefully sealed; as it goes indeed, at its best, by hard names, among those who grow it, such as *Chainette* and *Migraine*.

A kind of degeneration, of coarseness—the coarseness of satiety, and shapeless, battered-out appetite—with an almost savage taste for carnivorous diet, had come over the company. A rumour went abroad of certain women who had drowned, in mere wantonness, their newborn babes. A girl with child was found hanged by her own act in a dark cellar. Ah!

if Denys also had not felt himself mad! But when the guilt of a murder, committed with a great vine-axe far out among the vineyards, was attributed vaguely to him, he could but wonder whether it had been indeed thus, and the shadow of a fancied crime abode with him. People turned against their favourite, whose former charms must now be counted only as the fascinations of witchcraft. It was as if the wine poured out for them had soured in the cup. The golden age had indeed come back for a while:—golden was it, or gilded only, after all? and they were too sick, or at least too serious, to carry through their parts in it. The monk Hermes was whimsically reminded of that *after-thought* in pagan poetry, of a Wine-god who had been in hell. Denys certainly, with all his flaxen fairness about him, was manifestly a sufferer. At first he thought of departing secretly to some other place. Alas! his wits were too far gone for certainty of success in the attempt. He feared to be brought back a prisoner. Those fat years were over. It was a time of scarcity. The working people might not eat and drink of the good things they had helped to store away. Tears rose in the eyes of needy children, of old or weak people like children, as they woke up again and again to sunless, frost-bound, ruinous mornings; and the little hungry creatures went prowling after scattered hedge-nuts or dried vine-tendrils.

Mysterious, dark rains prevailed throughout the summer. The great offices of Saint John were fumbled through in a sudden darkness of unseasonable storm, which greatly damaged the carved ornaments of the church, the bishop reading his mid-day Mass by the light of the little candle at his book. And then, one night, the night which seemed literally to have swallowed up the shortest day in the year, a plot was contrived by certain persons to take Denys as he went and kill him privately for a sorcerer. He could hardly tell how he escaped, and found himself safe in his earliest home, the cottage in the cliff-side, with such a big fire as he delighted in burning upon the hearth. They made a little feast as well as they could for the beautiful hunted creature, with abundance of waxlights.

And at last the clergy bethought themselves of a remedy for this evil time. The body of one of the patron saints had lain neglected somewhere under the flagstones of the sanctuary. This must be piously exhumed, and provided with a shrine worthy of it. The goldsmiths, the jewellers and lapidaries, set diligently to work, and no long time after, the shrine, like a little cathedral with portals and tower complete, stood ready, its chiselled gold framing panels of rock crystal, on the great altar. Many bishops arrived, with King Lewis the Saint himself accompanied by his mother, to assist at the search for and disinterment of the sacred relics. In

their presence, the Bishop of Auxerre, with vestments of deep red in honour of the relics, blessed the new shrine, according to the office *De benedictione capsarum pro reliquiis*. The pavement of the choir, removed amid a surging sea of lugubrious chants, all persons fasting, discovered as if it had been a battlefield of mouldering human remains. Their odour rose plainly above the plentiful clouds of incense, such as was used in the king's private chapel. The search for the Saint himself continued in vain all day and far into the night. At last from a little narrow chest, into which the remains had been almost crushed together, the bishop's red-gloved hands drew the dwindled body, shrunken inconceivably, but still with every feature of the face traceable in a sudden oblique ray of ghastly dawn.

That shocking sight, after a sharp fit as though a demon were going out of him, as he rolled on the turf of the cloister to which he had fled alone from the suffocating church, where the crowd still awaited the Procession of the relics and the Mass *De reliquiis quæ continentur in Ecclesiis*, seemed indeed to have cured the madness of Denys, but certainly did not restore his gaiety. He was left a subdued, silent, melancholy creature. Turning now, with an odd revulsion of feeling, to gloomy objects, he picked out a ghastly shred from the common bones on the pavement to wear about his neck, and in a little while found his way to the monks

of Saint Germain, who gladly received him into their workshop, though secretly, in fear of his foes.

The busy tribe of variously gifted artists, labouring rapidly at the many works on hand for the final embellishment of the cathedral of St. Étienne, made those conventual buildings just then cheerful enough to lighten a melancholy, heavy even as that of our friend Denys. He took his place among the workmen, a conventual novice; a novice also as to whatever concerns any actual handicraft. He could but compound sweet incense for the sanctuary. And yet, again by merely visible presence, he made himself felt in all the varied exercise around him of those arts which address themselves first of all to sight. Unconsciously he defined a peculiar manner, alike of feeling and expression, to those skilful hands at work day by day with the chisel, the pencil, or the needle, in many an enduring form of exquisite fancy. In three successive phases or fashions might be traced, especially in the carved work, the humours he had determined. There was first wild gaiety, exuberant in a wreathing of life-like imageries, from which nothing really present in nature was excluded. That, as the soul of Denys darkened, had passed into obscure regions of the satiric, the grotesque and coarse. But from this time there was manifest, with no loss of power or effect, a well-assured seriousness, some-

what jealous and exclusive, not so much in the selection of the material on which the arts were to work, as in the precise sort of expression that should be induced upon it. It was as if the gay old pagan world had been *blessed* in some way; with effects to be seen most clearly in the rich miniature work of the manuscripts of the capitular library,—a marvellous Ovid especially, upon the pages of which those old loves and sorrows seemed to come to life again in medieval costume, as Denys, in cowl now and with tonsured head, leaned over the painter, and led his work, by a kind of visible sympathy, often unspoken, rather than by any formal comment.

Above all, there was a desire abroad to attain the instruments of a freer and more various sacred music than had been in use hitherto—a music that might express the whole compass of souls now grown to manhood. Auxerre, indeed, then as afterwards, was famous for its liturgical music. It was Denys, at last, to whom the thought occurred of combining in a fuller tide of music all the instruments then in use. Like the Wine-god of old, he had been a lover and patron especially of the music of the pipe, in all its varieties. Here, too, there had been evident those three fashions or "modes": —first, the simple and pastoral, the homely note of the pipe, like the piping of the wind itself from off the distant fields; then, the wild, savage din, that had cost so much to quiet people, and

driven excitable people mad. Now he would compose all this to sweeter purposes; and the building of the first organ became like the book of his life: it expanded to the full compass of his nature, in its sorrow and delight. In long, enjoyable days of wind and sun by the river-side, the seemingly half-witted "brother" sought and found the needful varieties of reed. The carpenters, under his instruction, set up the great wooden passages for the thunder; while the little pipes of pasteboard simulated the sound of the human voice singing to the victorious notes of the long metal trumpets. At times this also, as people heard night after night those wandering sounds, seemed like the work of a madman, though they awoke sometimes in wonder at snatches of a new, an unmistakable new music. It was the triumph of all the various modes of the power of the pipe, tamed, ruled, united. Only, on the painted shutters of the organ-case Apollo with his lyre in his hand, as lord of the strings, seemed to look askance on the music of the reed, in all the jealousy with which he put Marsyas to death so cruelly.

Meantime, the people, even his enemies, seemed to have forgotten him. Enemies, in truth, they still were, ready to take his life should the opportunity come; as he perceived when at last he ventured forth on a day of public ceremony. The bishop was to pronounce a blessing upon the foundations of a new bridge,

designed to take the place of the ancient Roman bridge which, repaired in a thousand places, had hitherto served for the chief passage of the Yonne. It was as if the disturbing of that time-worn masonry let out the dark spectres of departed times. Deep down, at the core of the central pile, a painful object was exposed—the skeleton of a child, placed there alive, it was rightly surmised, in the superstitious belief that, by way of vicarious substitution, its death would secure the safety of all who should pass over. There were some who found themselves, with a little surprise, looking round as if for a similar pledge of security in their new undertaking. It was just then that Denys was seen plainly, standing, in all essential features precisely as of old, upon one of the great stones prepared for the foundation of the new building. For a moment he felt the eyes of the people upon him full of that strange humour, and with characteristic alertness, after a rapid gaze over the grey city in its broad green framework of vineyards, best seen from this spot, flung himself down into the water and disappeared from view where the stream flowed most swiftly below a row of flour-mills. Some indeed fancied they had seen him emerge again safely on the deck of one of the great boats, loaded with grapes and wreathed triumphantly with flowers like a floating garden, which were then bringing down the vintage from the country; but generally the people

believed their strange enemy now at last departed for ever. Denys in truth was at work again in peace at the cloister, upon his house of reeds and pipes. At times his fits came upon him again ; and when they came, for his cure he would dig eagerly, turned sexton now, digging, by choice, graves for the dead in the various churchyards of the town. There were those who had seen him thus employed (that form seeming still to carry something of real sun-gold upon it) peering into the darkness, while his tears fell sometimes among the grim relics his mattock had disturbed.

In fact, from the day of the exhumation of the body of the Saint in the great church, he had had a wonderful curiosity for such objects, and one wintry day bethought him of removing the body of his mother from the unconsecrated ground in which it lay, that he might bury it in the cloister, near the spot where he was now used to work. At twilight he came over the frozen snow. As he passed through the stony barriers of the place the world around seemed curdled to the centre—all but himself, fighting his way across it, turning now and then right-about from the persistent wind, which dealt so roughly with his blond hair and the purple mantle whirled about him. The bones, hastily gathered, he placed, awefully but without ceremony, in a hollow space prepared secretly within the grave of another.

Meantime the winds of his organ were ready

to blow; and with difficulty he obtained grace from the Chapter for a trial of its powers on a notable public occasion, as follows. A singular guest was expected at Auxerre. In recompense for some service rendered to the Chapter in times gone by, the Sire de Chastellux had the hereditary dignity of a canon of the church. On the day of his reception he presented himself at the entrance of the choir in surplice and amice, worn over the military habit. The old count of Chastellux was lately dead, and the heir had announced his coming, according to custom, to claim his ecclesiastical privilege. There had been long feud between the houses of Chastellux and Auxerre; but on this happy occasion an offer of peace came with a proposal for the hand of the Lady Ariane.

The goodly young man arrived, and, duly arrayed, was received into his stall at vespers, the bishop assisting. It was then that the people heard the music of the organ, rolling over them for the first time, with various feelings of delight. But the performer on and author of the instrument was forgotten in his work, and there was no re-instatement of the former favourite. The religious ceremony was followed by a civic festival, in which Auxerre welcomed its future lord. The festival was to end at nightfall with a somewhat rude popular pageant, in which the person of Winter would be hunted blindfold through the streets. It was the sequel

to that earlier stage-play of the *Return from the East* in which Denys had been the central figure. The old forgotten player saw his part before him, and, as if mechanically, fell again into the chief place, monk's dress and all. It might restore his popularity : who could tell ? Hastily he donned the ashen-grey mantle, the rough haircloth about the throat, and went through the preliminary matter. And it happened that a point of the haircloth scratched his lip deeply, with a long trickling of blood upon the chin. It was as if the sight of blood transported the spectators with a kind of mad rage, and suddenly revealed to them the truth. The pretended hunting of the unholy creature became a real one, which brought out, in rapid increase, men's evil passions. The soul of Denys was already at rest, as his body, now borne along in front of the crowd, was tossed hither and thither, torn at last limb from limb. The men stuck little shreds of his flesh, or, failing that, of his torn raiment, into their caps ; the women lending their long hairpins for the purpose. The monk Hermes sought in vain next day for any remains of the body of his friend. Only, at nightfall, the heart of Denys was brought to him by a stranger, still entire. It must long since have mouldered into dust under the stone, marked with a cross, where he buried it in a dark corner of the cathedral aisle.

So the figure in the stained glass explained

itself. To me, Denys seemed to have been a real resident at Auxerre. On days of a certain atmosphere, when the trace of the Middle Age comes out, like old marks in the stones in rainy weather, I seemed actually to have seen the tortured figure there—to have met Denys l'Auxerrois in the streets.

III

SEBASTIAN VAN STORCK

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It was a winter-scene, by Adrian van de Velde, or by Isaac van Ostade. All the delicate poetry together with all the delicate comfort of the frosty season was in the leafless branches turned to silver, the furred dresses of the skaters, the warmth of the red-brick house-fronts under the gauze of white fog, the gleams of pale sunlight on the cuirasses of the mounted soldiers as they receded into the distance. Sebastian van Storck, confessedly the most graceful performer in all that skating multitude, moving in endless maze over the vast surface of the frozen water-meadow, liked best this season of the year for its expression of a perfect impassivity, or at least of a perfect repose. The earth was, or seemed to be, at rest, with a breathlessness of slumber which suited the young man's peculiar temper. The heavy summer, as it dried up the meadows now lying dead below the ice, set free a crowded and competing world of life, which, while it gleamed very pleasantly russet and

yellow for the painter Albert Cuyp, seemed wellnigh to suffocate Sebastian van Storck. Yet with all his appreciation of the national winter, Sebastian was not altogether a Hollander. His mother, of Spanish descent and Catholic, had given a richness of tone and form to the healthy freshness of the Dutch physiognomy, apt to preserve its youthfulness of aspect far beyond the period of life usual with other peoples. This mixed expression charmed the eye of Isaac van Ostade, who had painted his portrait from a sketch taken at one of those skating parties, with his plume of squirrel's tail and fur muff, in all the modest pleasantness of boyhood. When he returned home lately from his studies at a place far inland, at the proposal of his tutor, to recover, as the tutor suggested, a certain loss of robustness, something more than that cheerful indifference of early youth had passed away. The learned man, who held, as was alleged, the doctrines of a surprising new philosophy, reluctant to disturb too early the fine intelligence of the pupil entrusted to him, had found it, perhaps, a matter of honesty to send back to his parents one likely enough to catch from others any sort of theoretic light; for the letter he wrote dwelt much on the lad's intellectual fearlessness. "At present," he had written, "he is influenced more by curiosity than by a care for truth, according to the character of the

young. Certainly, he differs strikingly from his equals in age, by his passion for a vigorous intellectual gymnastic, such as the supine character of their minds renders distasteful to most young men, but in which he shows a fearlessness that at times makes me fancy that his ultimate destination may be the military life; for indeed the rigidly logical tendency of his mind always leads him out upon the practical. Don't misunderstand me! At present, he is strenuous only intellectually; and has given no definite sign of preference, as regards a vocation in life. But he seems to me to be one practical in this sense, that his theorems will shape life for him, directly; that he will always seek, as a matter of course, the effective equivalent to — the line of being which shall be the proper continuation of—his line of thinking. This intellectual rectitude, or candour, which to my mind has a kind of beauty in it, has reacted upon myself, I confess, with a searching quality." That "searching quality," indeed, many others also, people far from being intellectual, had experienced—an agitation of mind in his neighbourhood, oddly at variance with the composure of the young man's manner and surrounding, so jealously preserved.

In the crowd of spectators at the skating, whose eyes followed, so well-satisfied, the movements of Sebastian van Storck, were the mothers

of marriageable daughters, who presently became the suitors of this rich and distinguished youth, introduced to them, as now grown to man's estate, by his delighted parents. Dutch aristocracy had put forth all its graces to become the winter morn : and it was characteristic of the period that the artist tribe was there, on a grand footing,—in waiting, for the lights and shadows they liked best. The artists were, in truth, an important body just then, as a natural consequence of the nation's hard-won prosperity ; helping it to a full consciousness of the genial yet delicate homeliness it loved, for which it had fought so bravely, and was ready at any moment to fight anew, against man or the sea. Thomas de Keyser, who understood better than any one else the kind of quaint new Atticism which had found its way into the world over those waste salt marshes, wondering whether quite its finest type as he understood it could ever actually be seen there, saw it at last, in lively motion, in the person of Sebastian van Storck, and desired to paint his portrait. A little to his surprise, the young man declined the offer ; not graciously, as was thought.

Holland, just then, was reposing on its laurels after its long contest with Spain, in a short period of complete wellbeing, before troubles of another kind should set in. That a darker time might return again, was clearly enough felt by Sebastian the elder—a time

like that of William the Silent, with its insane civil animosities, which would demand similarly energetic personalities, and offer them similar opportunities. And then, it was part of his honest geniality of character to admire those who "get on" in the world. Himself had been, almost from boyhood, in contact with great affairs. A member of the States-General which had taken so hardly the kingly airs of Frederick Henry, he had assisted at the Congress of Munster, and figures conspicuously in Terburgh's picture of that assembly, which had finally established Holland as a first-rate power. The heroism by which the national wellbeing had been achieved was still of recent memory —the air full of its reverberation, and great movement. There was a tradition to be maintained; the sword by no means resting in its sheath. The age was still fitted to evoke a generous ambition; and this son, from whose natural gifts there was so much to hope for, might play his part, at least as a diplomatist, if the present quiet continued. Had not the learned man said that his natural disposition would lead him out always upon practice? And in truth, the memory of that Silent hero had its fascination for the youth. When, about this time, Peter de Keyser, Thomas's brother, unveiled at last his tomb of wrought bronze and marble in the *Nieuwe Kerk* at Delft, the young Sebastian was one of a small company

present, and relished much the cold and abstract simplicity of the monument, so conformable to the great, abstract, and unuttered force of the hero who slept beneath.

In complete contrast to all that is abstract or cold in art, the home of Sebastian, the family mansion of the Storcks—a house, the front of which still survives in one of those patient architectural pieces by Jan van der Heyde—was, in its minute and busy wellbeing, like an epitome of Holland itself with all the good-fortune of its "thriving genius" reflected, quite spontaneously, in the national taste. The nation had learned to content itself with a religion which told little, or not at all, on the outsides of things. But we may fancy that something of the religious spirit had gone, according to the law of the transmutation of forces, into the scrupulous care for cleanliness, into the grave, old-world, conservative beauty of Dutch houses, which meant that the life people maintained in them was normally affectionate and pure.

The most curious florists of Holland were ambitious to supply the Burgomaster van Storck with the choicest products of their skill for the garden spread below the windows on either side of the portico, and along the central avenue of hoary beeches which led to it. Naturally this house, within a mile of the city of Haarlem, became a resort of the artists, then mixing freely in great society, giving and receiving

hints as to the domestic picturesque. Creatures of leisure—of leisure on both sides—they were the appropriate complement of Dutch prosperity, as it was understood just then. Sebastian the elder could almost have wished his son to be one of them: it was the next best thing to being an influential publicist or statesman. The Dutch had just begun to see what a picture their country was—its canals, and *boompjis*, and endless, broadly-lighted meadows, and thousands of miles of quaint water-side: and their painters, the first true masters of landscape for its own sake, were further informing them in the matter. They were bringing proof, for all who cared to see, of the wealth of colour there was all around them in this, supposably, sad land. Above all, they developed the old Low-country taste for interiors. Those innumerable *genre* pieces—conversation, music, play—were in truth the equivalent of novel-reading for that day; its own actual life, in its own proper circumstances, reflected in various degrees of idealisation, with no diminution of the sense of reality (that is to say) but with more and more purged and perfected delightfulness of interest. Themselves illustrating, as every student of their history knows, the good-fellowship of family life, it was the ideal of that life which these artists depicted; the ideal of home in a country where the preponderant interest of life, after all, could not well be out of doors. Of the earth earthy—

genuine red earth of the old Adam—it was an ideal very different from that which the sacred Italian painters had evoked from the life of Italy, yet, in its best types, was not without a kind of natural religiousness. And in the achievement of a type of beauty so national and vernacular, the votaries of purely Dutch art might well feel that the Italianisers, like Berghem, Boll, and Jan Weenix went so far afield in vain.

The fine organisation and acute intelligence of Sebastian would have made him an effective connoisseur of the arts, as he showed by the justice of his remarks in those assemblies of the artists which his father so much loved. But in truth the arts were a matter he could but just tolerate. Why add, by a forced and artificial production, to the monotonous tide of competing, fleeting existence? Only, finding so much fine art actually about him, he was compelled (so to speak) to adjust himself to it; to ascertain and accept that in it which should least collide with, or might even carry forward a little, his own characteristic tendencies. Obviously somewhat jealous of his intellectual interests, he loved inanimate nature, it might have been thought, better than man. He cared nothing, indeed, for the warm sandbanks of Wynants, nor for those eerie relics of the ancient Dutch woodland which survive in Hobbema and Ruysdael, still less for the highly-coloured

sceneries of the academic band at Rome, in spite of the escape they provide one into clear breadth of atmosphere. For though Sebastian van Storck refused to travel, he loved the distant —enjoyed the sense of things seen from a distance, carrying us, as on wide wings of space itself, far out of one's actual surrounding. His preference in the matter of art was, therefore, for those prospects *à vol d'oiseau*—of the caged bird on the wing at last—of which Rubens had the secret, and still more Philip de Koninck, four of whose choicest works occupied the four walls of his chamber; visionary escapes, north, south, east, and west, into a wide-open though, it must be confessed, a somewhat sullen land. For the fourth of them he had exchanged with his mother a marvellously vivid Metsu, lately bequeathed to him, in which she herself was presented. They were the sole ornaments he permitted himself. From the midst of the busy and busy-looking house, crowded with the furniture and the pretty little toys of many generations, a long passage led the rare visitor up a winding staircase, and (again at the end of a long passage) he found himself as if shut off from the whole talkative Dutch world, and in the embrace of that wonderful quiet which is also possible in Holland at its height all around him. It was here that Sebastian could yield himself, with the only sort of love he had ever felt, to the supremacy of his difficult

thoughts.—A kind of *empty* place! Here, you felt, all had been mentally put to rights by the working-out of a long equation, which had zero is equal to zero for its result. Here one did, and perhaps felt, nothing; one only thought. Of living creatures only birds came there freely, the sea-birds especially, to attract and detain which there were all sorts of ingenious contrivances about the windows, such as one may see in the cottage sceneries of Jan Steen and others. There was something, doubtless, of his passion for distance in this welcoming of the creatures of the air. An extreme simplicity in their manner of life was, indeed, characteristic of many a distinguished Hollander—William the Silent, Baruch de Spinosa, the brothers de Witt. But the simplicity of Sebastian van Storck was something different from that, and certainly nothing democratic. His mother thought him like one disembarrassing himself carefully, and little by little, of all impediments, habituating himself gradually to make shift with as little as possible, in preparation for a long journey.

The Burgomaster van Storck entertained a party of friends, consisting chiefly of his favourite artists, one summer evening. The guests were seen arriving on foot in the fine weather, some of them accompanied by their wives and daughters, against the light of the low sun, falling red on the old trees of the avenue and the

faces of those who advanced along it :—Willem van Aelst, expecting to find hints for a flower-portrait in the exotics which would decorate the banqueting-room ; Gerard Dow, to feed his eye, amid all that glittering luxury, on the combat between candle-light and the last rays of the departing sun ; Thomas de Keyser, to catch by stealth the likeness of Sebastian the younger. Albert Cuyp was there, who, developing the latent gold in Rembrandt, had brought into his native Dordrecht a heavy wealth of sunshine, as exotic as those flowers or the eastern carpets on the Burgomaster's tables, with Hooch, the indoor Cuyp, and Willem van de Velde, who painted those shore-pieces with gay ships of war, such as he loved, for his patron's cabinet. Thomas de Keyser came, in company with his brother Peter, his niece, and young Mr. Nicholas Stone from England, pupil of that brother Peter, who afterwards married the niece. For the life of Dutch artists, too, was exemplary in matters of domestic relationship, its history telling many a cheering story of mutual faith in misfortune. Hardly less exemplary was the comradeship which they displayed among themselves, obscuring their own best gifts sometimes, one in the mere accessories of another man's work, so that they came together to-night with no fear of falling out, and spoiling the musical interludes of Madame van Storck in the large back par-

lour. A little way behind the other guests, three of them together, son, grandson, and the grandfather, moving slowly, came the Hondecoeters—Giles, Gybrecht, and Melchior. They led the party before the house was entered, by fading light, to see the curious poultry of the Burgomaster go to roost; and it was almost night when the supper-room was reached at last. The occasion was an important one to Sebastian, and to others through him. For (was it the music of the duets? he asked himself next morning, with a certain distaste as he remembered it all, or the heady Spanish wines poured out so freely in those narrow but deep Venetian glasses?) on this evening he approached more nearly than he had ever yet done to Mademoiselle van Westrheene, as she sat there beside the *clavecin* looking very ruddy and fresh in her white satin, trimmed with glossy crimson swans-down.

So genially attempered, so warm, was life become, in the land of which Pliny had spoken as scarcely dry land at all. And, in truth, the sea which Sebastian so much loved, and with so great a satisfaction and sense of wellbeing in every hint of its nearness, is never far distant in Holland. Invading all places, stealing under one's feet, insinuating itself everywhere along an endless network of canals (by no means such formal channels as we understand by the name, but picturesque rivers, with sedgy banks and

haunted by innumerable birds) its incidents present themselves oddly even in one's park or woodland walks; the ship in full sail appearing suddenly among the great trees or above the garden wall, where we had no suspicion of the presence of water. In the very conditions of life in such a country there was a standing force of pathos. The country itself shared the uncertainty of the individual human life; and there was pathos also in the constantly renewed, heavily-taxed labour, necessary to keep the native soil, fought for so unselfishly, there at all, with a warfare that must still be maintained when that other struggle with the Spaniard was over. But though Sebastian liked to breathe, so nearly, the sea and its influences, those were considerations he scarcely entertained. In his passion for *Schwindsucht*—we haven't the word—he found it pleasant to think of the resistless element which left one hardly a foot-space amidst the yielding sand; of the old beds of lost rivers, surviving now only as deeper channels in the sea; of the remains of a certain ancient town, which within men's memory had lost its few remaining inhabitants, and, with its already empty tombs, dissolved and disappeared in the flood.

It happened, on occasion of an exceptionally low tide, that some remarkable relics were exposed to view on the coast of the island of Vleeland. A countryman's waggon overtaken

by the tide, as he returned with merchandise from the shore! you might have supposed, but for a touch of grace in the construction of the thing—lightly wrought timber-work, united and adorned by a multitude of brass fastenings, like the work of children for their simplicity, while the rude, stiff chair, or throne, set upon it, seemed to distinguish it as a chariot of state. To some antiquarians it told the story of the overwhelming of one of the chiefs of the old primeval people of Holland, amid all his gala array, in a great storm. But it was another view which Sebastian preferred; that this object was sepulchral, namely, in its motive—the one surviving relic of a grand burial, in the ancient manner, of a king or hero, whose very tomb was wasted away.—*Sunt metis metæ!* There came with it the odd fancy that he himself would like to have been dead and gone as long ago, with a kind of envy of those whose deceasing was so long since over.

On more peaceful days he would ponder Pliny's account of those primeval forefathers, but without Pliny's contempt for them. A cloyed Roman might despise their humble existence, fixed by necessity from age to age, and with no desire of change, as "the ocean poured in its flood twice a day, making it uncertain whether the country was a part of the continent or of the sea." But for his part Sebastian found something of poetry in all that,

as he conceived what thoughts the old Hollander might have had at his fishing, with nets themselves woven of seaweed, waiting carefully for his drink on the heavy rains, and taking refuge, as the flood rose, on the sand-hills, in a little hut constructed but airily on tall stakes, conformable to the elevation of the highest tides, like a navigator, thought the learned writer, when the sea was risen, like a shipwrecked mariner when it was retired. For the fancy of Sebastian he lived with great breadths of calm light above and around him, influenced by, and, in a sense, living upon them, and surely might well complain, though to Pliny's so infinite surprise, on being made a Roman citizen.

And certainly Sebastian van Storck did not felicitate his people on the luck which, in the words of another old writer, "hath disposed them to so thriving a genius." Their restless ingenuity in making and maintaining dry land where nature had willed the sea, was even more like the industry of animals than had been that life of their forefathers. Away with that tetchy, feverish, unworthy agitation! with this and that, all too importunate, motive of interest! And then, "My son!" said his father, "be stimulated to action!" he, too, thinking of that heroic industry which had triumphed over nature precisely where the contest had been most difficult.

Yet, in truth, Sebastian was forcibly taken by the simplicity of a great affection, as set forth in an incident of real life of which he heard just then. The eminent Grotius being condemned to perpetual imprisonment, his wife determined to share his fate, alleviated only by the reading of books sent by friends. The books, finished, were returned in a great chest. In this chest the wife enclosed the husband, and was able to reply to the objections of the soldiers who carried it complaining of its weight, with a self-control, which she maintained till the captive was in safety, herself remaining to face the consequences; and there was a kind of absoluteness of affection in that, which attracted Sebastian for a while to ponder on the practical forces which shape men's lives. Had he turned, indeed, to a practical career it would have been less in the direction of the military or political life than of another form of enterprise popular with his countrymen. In the eager, gallant life of that age, if the sword fell for a moment into its sheath, they were for starting off on perilous voyages to the regions of frost and snow in search after that "North-Western passage," for the discovery of which the States-General had offered large rewards. Sebastian, in effect, found a charm in the thought of that still, drowsy, spellbound world of perpetual ice, as in art and life he could always tolerate the sea. Admiral-general of Holland,

as painted by Van der Helst, with a marine background by Backhuizen :—at moments his father could fancy him so.

There was still another very different sort of character to which Sebastian would let his thoughts stray, without check, for a time. His mother, whom he much resembled outwardly, a Catholic from Brabant, had had saints in her family, and from time to time the mind of Sebastian had been occupied on the subject of monastic life, its quiet, its negation. The portrait of a certain Carthusian prior, which, like the famous statue of Saint Bruno, the first Carthusian, in the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli at Rome, could it have spoken, would have said, "Silence!" kept strange company with the painted visages of men of affairs. A great theological strife was then raging in Holland. Grave ministers of religion assembled sometimes, as in the painted scene by Rembrandt, in the Burgomaster's house, and once, not however in their company, came a renowned young Jewish divine, Baruch de Spinosa, with whom, most unexpectedly, Sebastian found himself in sympathy, meeting the young Jew's far-reaching thoughts half-way, to the confirmation of his own; and he did not know that his visitor, very ready with the pencil, had taken his likeness as they talked on the fly-leaf of his note-book. Alive to that theological disturbance in the air all around him, he refused to be

moved by it, as essentially a strife on small matters, anticipating a vagrant regret which may have visited many other minds since, the regret, namely, that the old, pensive, use-and-wont Catholicism, which had accompanied the nation's earlier struggle for existence, and consoled it therein, had been taken from it. And for himself, indeed, what impressed him in that old Catholicism was a kind of lull in it—a lulling power—like that of the monotonous organ-music, which Holland, Catholic or not, still so greatly loves. But what he could not away with in the Catholic religion was its unfailing drift towards the concrete—the positive imageries of a faith, so richly beset with persons, things, historical incidents.

Rigidly logical in the method of his inferences, he attained the poetic quality only by the audacity with which he conceived the whole sublime extension of his premises. The contrast was a strange one between the careful, the almost petty fineness of his personal surrounding—all the elegant conventionalities of life, in that rising Dutch family—and the mortal coldness of a temperament, the intellectual tendencies of which seemed to necessitate straightforward flight from all that was positive. He seemed, if one may say so, in love with death; preferring winter to summer; finding only a tranquillising influence in the thought of the earth beneath our feet cooling down for ever

from its old cosmic heat ; watching pleasurably how their colours fled out of things, and the long sand-bank in the sea, which had been the rampart of a town, was washed down in its turn. One of his acquaintance, a penurious young poet, who, having nothing in his pockets but the imaginative or otherwise barely potential gold of manuscript verses, would have grasped so eagerly, had they lain within his reach, at the elegant outsides of life, thought the fortunate Sebastian, possessed of every possible opportunity of that kind, yet bent only on dispensing with it, certainly a most puzzling and comfortless creature. A few only, half discerning what was in his mind, would fain have shared his intellectual clearness, and found a kind of beauty in this youthful enthusiasm for an abstract theorem. Extremes meeting, his cold and dispassionate detachment from all that is most attractive to ordinary minds came to have the impressiveness of a great passion. And for the most part, people had loved him ; feeling instinctively that somewhere there must be the justification of his difference from themselves. It was like being in love : or it was an intellectual malady, such as pleaded for forbearance, like bodily sickness, and gave at times a resigned and touching sweetness to what he did and said. Only once, at a moment of the wild popular excitement which at that period was easy to provoke in Holland, there was a certain

group of persons who would have shut him up as no well-wisher to, and perhaps a plotter against, the common-weal. A single traitor might cut the dykes in an hour, in the interest of the English or the French. Or, had he already committed some treasonable act, who was so anxious to expose no writing of his that he left his very letters unsigned, and there were little stratagems to get specimens of his fair manuscript? For with all his breadth of mystic intention, he was persistent, as the hours crept on, to leave all the inevitable details of life at least in order, in equation. And all his singularities appeared to be summed up in his refusal to take his place in the life-sized family group (*très distingué et très soigné*, remarks a modern critic of the work) painted about this time. His mother expostulated with him on the matter:—she must needs feel, a little icily, the emptiness of hope, and something more than the due measure of cold in things for a woman of her age, in the presence of a son who desired but to fade out of the world like a breath—and she suggested filial duty. "Good mother," he answered, "there are duties towards the intellect also, which women can but rarely understand."

The artists and their wives were come to supper again, with the Burgomaster van Storck. Mademoiselle van Westrheene was also come, with her sister and mother. The girl was by

this time fallen in love with Sebastian; and she was one of the few who, in spite of his terrible coldness, really loved him for himself. But though of good birth she was poor, while Sebastian could not but perceive that he had many suitors of his wealth. In truth, Madame van Westrheene, her mother, did wish to marry this daughter into the great world, and plied many arts to that end, such as "daughterful" mothers use. Her healthy freshness of mien and mind, her ruddy beauty, some showy presents that had passed, were of a piece with the ruddy colouring of the very house these people lived in; and for a moment the cheerful warmth that may be felt in life seemed to come very close to him,—to come forth, and enfold him. Meantime the girl herself taking note of this, that on a former occasion of their meeting he had seemed likely to respond to her inclination, and that his father would readily consent to such a marriage, surprised him on the sudden with those coquetries and importunities, all those little arts of love, which often succeed with men. Only, to Sebastian they seemed opposed to that absolute nature we suppose in love. And while, in the eyes of all around him to-night, this courtship seemed to promise him, thus early in life, a kind of quiet happiness, he was coming to an estimate of the situation, with strict regard to that ideal of a calm, intellectual indifference, of which he was

the sworn chevalier. Set in the cold, hard light of that ideal, this girl, with the pronounced personal views of her mother, and in the very effectiveness of arts prompted by a real affection, bringing the warm life they prefigured so close to him, seemed vulgar! And still he felt himself bound in honour; or judged from their manner that she and those about them thought him thus bound. He did not reflect on the inconsistency of the feeling of honour (living, as it does essentially, upon the concrete and minute detail of social relationship) for one who, on principle, set so slight a value on anything whatever that is merely relative in its character.

The guests, lively and late, were almost pledging the betrothed in the rich wine. Only Sebastian's mother knew; and at that advanced hour, while the company were thus intently occupied, drew away the Burgomaster to confide to him the misgiving she felt, grown to a great height just then. The young man had slipped from the assembly; but certainly not with Mademoiselle van Westrheene, who was suddenly withdrawn also. And she never appeared again in the world. Already, next day, with the rumour that Sebastian had left his home, it was known that the expected marriage would not take place. The girl, indeed, alleged something in the way of a cause on her part; but seemed to fade away continually afterwards, and in the eyes of all who saw her was like one

perishing of wounded pride. But to make a clean breast of her poor girlish worldliness, before she became a *béguine*, she confessed to her mother the receipt of the letter—the cruel letter that had killed her. And in effect, the first copy of this letter, written with a very deliberate fineness, rejecting her—accusing her, so natural, and simply loyal! of a vulgar coarseness of character—was found, oddly tacked on, as their last word, to the studious record of the abstract thoughts which had been the real business of Sebastian's life, in the room whither his mother went to seek him next day, littered with the fragments of the one portrait of him in existence.

The neat and elaborate manuscript volume, of which this letter formed the final page (odd transition! by which a train of thought so abstract drew its conclusion in the sphere of action) afforded at length to the few who were interested in him a much-coveted insight into the curiosity of his existence; and I pause just here to indicate in outline the kind of reasoning through which, making the "Infinite" his beginning and his end, Sebastian had come to think all definite forms of being, the warm pressure of life, the cry of nature itself, no more than a troublesome irritation of the surface of the one absolute mind, a passing vexatious thought or uneasy dream there, at its height of petulant importunity in the eager, human creature.

The volume was, indeed, a kind of treatise to be :—a hard, systematic, well-concatenated train of thought, still implicated in the circumstances of a journal. Freed from the accidents of that particular literary form with its unavoidable details of place and occasion, the theoretic strain would have been found mathematically continuous. The already so weary Sebastian might perhaps never have taken in hand, or succeeded in, this detachment of his thoughts ; every one of which, beginning with himself, as the peculiar and intimate apprehension of this or that particular day and hour, seemed still to protest against such disturbance, as if reluctant to part from those accidental associations of the personal history which had prompted it, and so become a purely intellectual abstraction.

The series began with Sebastian's boyish enthusiasm for a strange, fine saying of Doctor Baruch de Spinosa, concerning the Divine Love : —That whoso loveth God truly must not expect to be loved by him in return. In mere reaction against an actual surrounding of which every circumstance tended to make him a finished egotist, that bold assertion defined for him the ideal of an intellectual disinterestedness, of a domain of unimpassioned mind, with the desire to put one's subjective side out of the way, and let pure reason speak.

And what pure reason affirmed in the first place, as the "beginning of wisdom," was that

the world is but a thought, or a series of thoughts: that it exists, therefore, solely in mind. It showed him, as he fixed the mental eye with more and more of self-absorption on the phenomena of his intellectual existence, a picture or vision of the universe as actually the product, so far as he really knew it, of his own lonely thinking power—of himself, there, thinking: as being zero without him: and as possessing a perfectly homogeneous unity in that fact. "Things that have nothing in common with each other," said the axiomatic reason, "cannot be understood or explained by means of each other." But to pure reason things discovered themselves as being, in their essence, thoughts:—all things, even the most opposite things, mere transmutations of a single power, the power of thought. All was but conscious mind. Therefore, all the more exclusively, he must minister to mind, to the intellectual power, submitting himself to the sole direction of that, whithersoever it might lead him. Everything must be referred to, and, as it were, changed into the terms of that, if its essential value was to be ascertained. "Joy," he said, anticipating Spinosa—that, for the attainment of which men are ready to surrender all beside—"is but the name of a passion in which the mind passes to a greater perfection or power of thinking; as grief is the name of the passion in which it passes to a less."

Looking backward for the generative source of that creative power of thought in him, from his own mysterious intellectual being to its first cause, he still reflected, as one can but do, the enlarged pattern of himself into the vague region of hypothesis. In this way, some, at all events, would have explained his mental process. To him that process was nothing less than the apprehension, the revelation, of the greatest and most real of ideas—the true substance of all things. He, too, with his vividly-coloured existence, with this picturesque and sensuous world of Dutch art and Dutch reality all around that would fain have made him the prisoner of its colours, its genial warmth, its struggle for life, its selfish and crafty love, was but a transient perturbation of the one absolute mind ; of which, indeed, all finite things whatever, time itself, the most durable achievements of nature and man, and all that seems most like independent energy, are no more than petty accidents or affections. Theorem and corollary ! Thus they stood :

" *There can be only one substance :* (corollary) it is the greatest of errors to think that the non-existent, the world of finite things seen and felt, really is : (theorem) : *for, whatever is, is but in that :* (practical corollary) : one's wisdom, therefore, consists in hastening, so far as may be, the action of those forces which tend to the restoration of equilibrium, the calm surface of the absolute, untroubled mind, to *tabula rasa*, by

the extinction in one's self of all that is but correlative to the finite illusion—by the suppression of ourselves."

In the loneliness which was gathering round him, and, oddly enough, as a somewhat surprising thing, he wondered whether there were, or had been, others possessed of like thoughts, ready to welcome any such as his veritable compatriots. And in fact he became aware just then, in readings difficult indeed, but which from their all-absorbing interest seemed almost like an illicit pleasure, a sense of kinship with certain older minds. The study of many an earlier adventurous theorist satisfied his curiosity as the record of daring physical adventure, for instance, might satisfy the curiosity of the healthy. It was a tradition—a constant tradition—that daring thought of his; an echo, or haunting recurrent voice of the human soul itself, and as such sealed with natural truth, which certain minds would not fail to heed; discerning also, if they were really loyal to themselves, its practical conclusion.—The one alone is: and all things beside are but its passing affections, which have no necessary or proper right to be.

As but such "accidents" or "affections," indeed, there might have been found, within the circumference of that one infinite creative thinker, some scope for the joy and love of the creature. There have been dispositions in which that abstract theorem has only induced a renewed

value for the finite interests around and within us. Centre of heat and light, truly nothing has seemed to lie beyond the touch of its perpetual summer. It has allied itself to the poetical or artistic sympathy, which feels challenged to acquaint itself with and explore the various forms of finite existence all the more intimately, just because of that sense of one lively spirit circulating through all things—a tiny particle of the one soul, in the sunbeam, or the leaf. Sebastian van Storck, on the contrary, was determined, perhaps by some inherited satiety or fatigue in his nature, to the opposite issue of the practical dilemma. For him, that one abstract being was as the pallid Arctic sun, disclosing itself over the dead level of a glacial, a barren and absolutely lonely sea. The lively purpose of life had been frozen out of it. What he must admire, and love if he could, was "equilibrium," the void, the *tabula rasa*, into which, through all those apparent energies of man and nature, that in truth are but forces of disintegration, the world was really settling. And, himself a mere circumstance in a fatalistic series, to which the clay of the potter was no sufficient parallel, he could not expect to be "loved in return." At first, indeed, he had a kind of delight in his thoughts—in the eager pressure forward, to whatsoever conclusion, of a rigid intellectual gymnastic, which was like the making of Euclid. Only, little by little, under

the freezing influence of such propositions, the theoretic energy itself, and with it his old eagerness for truth, the care to track it from proposition to proposition, was chilled out of him. In fact, the conclusion was there already, and might have been foreseen, in the premises. By a singular perversity, it seemed to him that every one of those passing "affections"—he too, alas! at times—was for ever trying to be, to assert *itself*, to maintain its isolated and petty self, by a kind of practical lie in things; although through every incident of its hypothetic existence it had protested that its proper function was to die. Surely! those transient affections marred the freedom, the truth, the beatific calm, of the absolute selfishness, which could not, if it would, pass beyond the circumference of itself; to which, at times, with a fantastic sense of wellbeing, he was capable of a sort of fanatical devotion. And those, as he conceived, were his moments of genuine theoretic insight, in which, under the abstract "perpetual light," he died to self; while the intellect, after all, had attained a freedom of its own through the vigorous act which assured him that, as nature was but a thought of his, so himself also was but the passing thought of God.

No! rather a puzzle only, an anomaly, upon that one, white, unruffled consciousness! His first principle once recognised, all the rest, the whole array of propositions down to the

heartless practical conclusion, must follow of themselves. Detachment: to hasten hence: to fold up one's whole self, as a vesture put aside: to anticipate, by such individual force as he could find in him, the slow disintegration by which nature herself is levelling the eternal hills:—here would be the secret of peace, of such dignity and truth as there could be in a world which after all was essentially an illusion. For Sebastian at least, the world and the individual alike had been divested of all effective purpose. The most vivid of finite objects, the dramatic episodes of Dutch history, the brilliant personalities which had found their parts to play in them, that golden art, surrounding us with an ideal world, beyond which the real world is discernible indeed, but etherealised by the medium through which it comes to one: all this, for most men so powerful a link to existence, only set him on the thought of escape—means of escape—into a formless and nameless infinite world, quite evenly grey. The very emphasis of those objects, their importunity to the eye, the ear, the finite intelligence, was but the measure of their distance from what really is. One's personal presence, the presence, such as it is, of the most incisive things and persons around us, could only lessen by so much, that which really is. To restore *tabula rasa*, then, by a continual effort at self-effacement! Actually proud at times of his curious, well-reasoned nihilism, he

could but regard what is called the business of life as no better than a trifling and wearisome delay. Bent on making sacrifice of the rich existence possible for him, as he would readily have sacrificed that of other people, to the bare and formal logic of the answer to a query (never proposed at all to entirely healthy minds) regarding the remote conditions and tendencies of that existence, he did not reflect that if others had inquired as curiously as himself the world could never have come so far at all—that the fact of its having come so far was itself a weighty exception to his hypothesis. His odd devotion, soaring or sinking into fanaticism, into a kind of religious mania, with what was really a vehement assertion of his individual will, he had formulated duty as the principle to hinder as little as possible what he called the restoration of equilibrium, the restoration of the primary consciousness to itself —its relief from that uneasy, tetchy, unworthy dream of a world, made so ill, or dreamt so weakly—to forget, to be forgotten.

And at length this dark fanaticism, losing the support of his pride in the mere novelty of a reasoning so hard and dry, turned round upon him, as our fanaticism will, in black melancholy. The theoretic or imaginative desire to urge Time's creeping footsteps, was felt now as the physical fatigue which leaves the book or the letter unfinished, or finishes eagerly out of hand, for mere finishing's sake, unimportant business.

Strange! that the presence to the mind of a metaphysical abstraction should have had this power over one so fortunately endowed for the reception of the sensible world. It could hardly have been so with him but for the concurrence of physical causes with the influences proper to a mere thought. The moralist, indeed, might have noted that a meaner kind of pride, the morbid fear of vulgarity, lent secret strength to the intellectual prejudice, which realised duty as the renunciation of all finite objects, the fastidious refusal to be or do any limited thing. But besides this it was legible in his own admissions from time to time, that the body, following, as it does with powerful temperaments, the lead of mind and the will, the intellectual consumption (so to term it) had been concurrent with, had strengthened and been strengthened by, a vein of physical *phthisis* — by a merely physical accident, after all, of his bodily constitution, such as might have taken a different turn, had another accident fixed his home among the hills instead of on the shore. Is it only the result of disease? he would ask himself sometimes with a sudden suspicion of his intellectual cogency—this persuasion that myself, and all that surrounds me, are but a diminution of that which really is?—this unkindly melancholy?

The journal, with that "cruel" letter to Mademoiselle van Westrheene coming as the last step in the rigid process of theoretic deduc-

tion, circulated among the curious; and people made their judgments upon it. There were some who held that such opinions should be suppressed by law; that they were, or might become, dangerous to society. Perhaps it was the confessor of his mother who thought of the matter most justly. The aged man smiled, observing how, even for minds by no means superficial, the mere dress it wears alters the look of a familiar thought; with a happy sort of smile, as he added (reflecting that such truth as there was in Sebastian's theory was duly covered by the propositions of his own creed, and quoting Sebastian's favourite pagan wisdom from the lips of Saint Paul) "in Him, we live, and move, and have our being."

Next day, as Sebastian escaped to the sea under the long, monotonous line of wind-mills, in comparative calm of mind—reaction of that pleasant morning from the madness of the night before—he was making light, or trying to make light, with some success, of his late distress. He would fain have thought it a small matter, to be adequately set at rest for him by certain well-tested influences of external nature, in a long visit to the place he liked best: a desolate house, amid the sands of the Helder, one of the old lodgings of his family, property now, rather, of the sea-birds, and almost surrounded by the encroaching tide, though there were still relics enough of hardy, sweet things about it, to form

what was to Sebastian the most perfect garden in Holland. Here he could make "equation" between himself and what was not himself, and set things in order, in preparation towards such deliberate and final change in his manner of living as circumstances so clearly necessitated.

As he stayed in this place, with one or two silent serving people, a sudden rising of the wind altered, as it might seem, in a few dark, tempestuous hours, the entire world around him. The strong wind changed not again for fourteen days, and its effect was a permanent one ; so that people might have fancied that an enemy had indeed cut the dykes somewhere—a pin-hole enough to wreck the ship of Holland, or at least this portion of it, which underwent an inundation of the sea the like of which had not occurred in that province for half a century. Only, when the body of Sebastian was found, apparently not long after death, a child lay asleep, swaddled warmly in his heavy furs, in an upper room of the old tower, to which the tide was almost risen ; though the building still stood firmly, and still with the means of life in plenty. And it was in the saving of this child, with a great effort, as certain circumstances seemed to indicate, that Sebastian had lost his life.

His parents were come to seek him, believing him bent on self-destruction, and were almost glad to find him thus. A learned physician, moreover, endeavoured to comfort his mother by

remarking that in any case he must certainly have died ere many years were passed, slowly, perhaps painfully, of a disease then coming into the world ; disease begotten by the fogs of that country—waters, he observed, not in their place, "above the firmament"—on people grown somewhat over-delicate in their nature by the effects of modern luxury.

IV

DUKE CARL OF ROSENMOLD

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One stormy season about the beginning of the present century, a great tree came down among certain moss-covered ridges of old masonry which break the surface of the Rosenmold heath, exposing, together with its roots, the remains of two persons. Whether the bodies (male and female, said German bone-science) had been purposely buried there was questionable. They seemed rather to have been hidden away by the accident, whatever it was, which had caused death—crushed, perhaps, under what had been the low wall of a garden—being much distorted, and lying, though neatly enough discovered by the upheaval of the soil, in great confusion. People's attention was the more attracted to the incident because popular fancy had long run upon a tradition of buried treasures, golden treasures, in or about the antiquated ruin which the garden boundary enclosed; the roofless shell of a small but solidly-built stone house, burnt or overthrown, perhaps in the time of the wars at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Many persons went to

visit the remains lying out on the dark, wild *plateau*, which stretches away above the tallest roofs of the old grand-ducal town, very distinctly outlined, on that day, in deep fluid grey against a sky still heavy with coming rain. No treasure, indeed, was forthcoming among the masses of fallen stone. But the tradition was so far verified, that the bones had rich golden ornaments about them; and for the minds of some long-remembering people their discovery set at rest an old query. It had never been precisely known what was become of the young Duke Carl, who disappeared from the world just a century before, about the time when a great army passed over those parts, at a political crisis, one result of which was the final absorption of his small territory in a neighbouring dominion. Restless, romantic, eccentric, had he passed on with the victorious host, and taken the chances of an obscure soldier's life? Certain old letters hinted at a different ending—love-letters which provided for a secret meeting, preliminary perhaps to the final departure of the young Duke (who, by the usage of his realm, could only with extreme difficulty go whither, or marry whom, he pleased) to whatever worlds he had chosen, not of his own people. The minds of those still interested in the matter were now at last made up, the disposition of the remains suggesting to them the lively picture of a sullen night, the unexpected passing of the great army,

and the two lovers rushing forth wildly at the sudden tumult outside their cheerful shelter, caught in the dark and trampled out so, surprised and unseen, among the horses and heavy guns.

Time, at the court of the Grand-duke of Rosenmold, at the beginning of the eighteenth century might seem to have been standing still almost since the Middle Age—since the days of the Emperor Charles the Fifth, at which period, by the marriage of the hereditary Grand-duke with a princess of the Imperial house, a sudden tide of wealth, flowing through the grand-ducal exchequer, had left a kind of golden architectural splendour on the place, always too ample for its population. The sloping Gothic roofs for carrying off the heavy snows still indented the sky—a world of tiles, with space uncurtailed for the awkward gambols of that very German goblin, Hans Klapper, on the long, slumberous, northern nights. Whole quarryfuls of wrought stone had been piled along the streets and around the squares, and were now grown, in truth, like nature's self again, in their rough, time-worn massiveness, with weeds and wild flowers where their decay accumulated, blossoming, always the same, beyond people's memories, every summer, as the storks came back to their platforms on the remote chimney-tops. Without, all was as it had been on the eve of the Thirty Years' War: the venerable dark-green mouldiness, priceless pearl of architectural effect, was un-

broken by a single new gable. And within, human life—its thoughts, its habits, above all, its etiquette—had been put out by no matter of excitement, political or intellectual, ever at all, one might say, at any time. The rambling grand-ducal palace was full to overflowing with furniture, which, useful or useless, was all ornamental, and none of it new. Suppose the various objects, especially the contents of the haunted old lumber-rooms, duly arranged and ticketed, and their Highnesses would have had a historic museum, after which those famed "Green Vaults" at Dresden would hardly have counted as one of the glories of Augustus the Strong. An immense heraldry, that truly German vanity, had grown, expatiating, florid, eloquent, over everything, without and within—windows, house-fronts, church walls, and church floors. And one-half of the male inhabitants were big or little State functionaries, mostly of a *quasi* decorative order—the treble-singer to the town-council, the court organist, the court poet, and the like—each with his deputies and assistants, maintaining, all unbroken, a sleepy ceremonial, to make the hours just noticeable as they slipped away. At court, with a continuous round of ceremonies, which, though early in the day, must always take place under a jealous exclusion of the sun, one seemed to live in perpetual candle-light.

It was in a delightful rummaging of one of those lumber-rooms, escaped from that candle-

light into the broad day of the uppermost windows, that the young Duke Carl laid his hand on an old volume of the year 1486, printed in heavy type, with frontispiece, perhaps, by Albert Dürer—*Ars Versificandi: The Art of Versification:* by Conrad Celtes. Crowned poet of the Emperor Frederick the Third, he had the right to speak on that subject; for while he vindicated as best he might old German literature against the charge of barbarism, he did also a man's part towards reviving in the Fatherland the knowledge of the poetry of Greece and Rome; and for Carl, the pearl, the golden nugget, of the volume was the Sapphic ode with which it closed—*To Apollo, praying that he would come to us from Italy, bringing his lyre with him: Ad Apollinem, ut ab Italis cum lyra ad Germanos veniat.* The god of light, coming to Germany from some more favoured world beyond it, over leagues of rainy hill and mountain, making soft day there: that had ever been the dream of the ghost-ridden yet deep-feeling and certainly meek German soul; of the great Dürer, for instance, who had been the friend of this Conrad Celtes, and himself, all German as he was, like a gleam of real day amid that hyperborean German darkness—a darkness which clave to him, too, at that dim time, when there were violent robbers, nay, real live devils, in every German wood. And it was precisely the aspiration of Carl himself. Those verses, coming to the boy's hand at the

right moment, brought a beam of effectual daylight to a whole magazine of observation, fancy, desire, stored up from the first impressions of childhood. To bring Apollo with his lyre to Germany! It was precisely that he, Carl, desired to do—was, as he might flatter himself, actually doing.

The daylight, the Apolline aurora, which the young Duke Carl claimed to be bringing to his candle-lit people, came in the somewhat questionable form of the contemporary French ideal, in matters of art and literature—French plays, French architecture, French looking-glasses—Apollo in the dandified costume of Lewis the Fourteenth. Only, confronting the essentially aged and decrepit graces of his model with his own essentially youthful temper, he invigorated what he borrowed; and with him an aspiration towards the classical ideal, so often hollow and insincere, lost all its affectation. His doating grandfather, the reigning Grand-duke, afforded readily enough, from the great store of inherited wealth which would one day be the lad's, the funds necessary for the completion of the vast unfinished Residence, with "pavilions" (after the manner of the famous Mansard) uniting its scattered parts; while a wonderful flowerage of architectural fancy, with broken attic roofs, passed over and beyond the earlier fabric; the later and lighter forms being in part carved adroitly out of the

heavy masses of the old, honest, "stump Gothic" tracery. One fault only Carl found in his French models, and was resolute to correct. He would have, at least within, real marble in place of stucco, and, if he might, perhaps solid gold for gilding. There was something in the sanguine, floridly handsome youth, with his alertness of mind turned wholly, amid the vexing preoccupations of an age of war, upon embellishment and the softer things of life, which soothed the testy humours of the old Duke, like the quiet physical warmth of a fire or the sun. He was ready to preside with all ceremony at a presentation of Marivaux's *Death of Hannibal*, played in the original, with such imperfect mastery of the French accent as the lovers of new light in Rosenmold had at command, in a theatre copied from that at Versailles, lined with pale yellow satin, and with a picture, amid the stucco braveries of the ceiling, of the Septentrional Apollo himself, in somewhat watery red and blue. Innumerable wax lights in cut-glass lustres were a thing of course. Duke Carl himself, attired after the newest French fashion, played the part of Hannibal. The old Duke, indeed, at a council-board devoted hitherto to matters of state, would nod very early in certain long discussions on matters of art—magnificent schemes, from this or that eminent contractor, for spending his money tastefully, distinguishings of the *rococo*

and the *baroque*. On the other hand, having been all his life in close intercourse with select humanity, self-conscious and arrayed for presentation, he was a helpful judge of portraits and the various degrees of the attainment of truth therein —a phase of fine art which the grandson could not value too much. The sergeant-painter and the deputy sergeant-painter were, indeed, conventional performers enough ; as mechanical in their dispensation of wigs, finger-rings, ruffles, and simpers, as the figure of the armed knight who struck the bell in the Residence tower. But scattered through its half-deserted rooms, state bed-chambers and the like, hung the works of more genuine masters, still as unadulterate as the hock, known to be two generations old, in the grand-ducal cellar. The youth had even his scheme of inviting the illustrious Antony Coppel to the court ; to live there, if he would, with the honours and emoluments of a prince of the blood. The illustrious Mansard had actually promised to come, had not his sudden death taken him away from earthly glory.

And at least, if one must forgo the masters, masterpieces might be had for their price. For ten thousand marks—day ever to be remembered ! —a genuine work of "the Urbinate," from the cabinet of a certain commercially-minded Italian grand-duke, was on its way to Rosenmold, anxiously awaited as it came over rainy mountain-passes, and along the rough German

roads, through doubtful weather. The tribune, the throne itself, were made ready in the presence-chamber, with hangings in the grand-ducal colours, laced with gold, together with a speech and an ode. Late at night, at last, the waggon was heard rumbling into the courtyard, with the guest arrived in safety, but, if one must confess one's self, perhaps forbidding at first sight. From a comfortless portico, with all the grotesqueness of the Middle Age, supported by brown, aged bishops, whose meditations no incident could distract, Our Lady looked out no better than an unpretending nun, with nothing to say the like of which one was used to hear. Certainly one was not stimulated by, enwrapped, absorbed in the great master's doings; only, with much private disappointment, put on one's mettle to defend him against critics notoriously wanting in sensibility, and against one's self. In truth, the painter whom Carl most unaffectedly enjoyed, the real vigour of his youthful and somewhat animal taste finding here its proper sustenance, was Rubens —Rubens reached, as he is reached at his best, in well-preserved family portraits, fresh, gay, ingenious, as of privileged young people who could never grow old. Had not he, too, brought something of the splendour of a "better land" into those northern regions; if not the glowing gold of Titian's Italian sun, yet the carnation and yellow of roses or tulips, such as

might really grow there with cultivation, even under rainy skies? And then, about this time something was heard at the grand-ducal court of certain mysterious experiments in the making of porcelain; veritable alchemy, for the turning of clay into gold. The reign of Dresden china was at hand, with one's own world of little men and women more delightfully diminutive still, amid imitations of artificial flowers. The young Duke braced himself for a plot to steal the gifted Herr Böttcher from his enforced residence, as if in prison, at the fortress of Meissen. Why not bring pots and wheels to Rosenmold, and prosecute his discoveries there? The Grand-duke, indeed, preferred his old service of gold plate, and would have had the lad a *virtuoso* in nothing less costly than gold—gold snuff-boxes.

For, in truth, regarding what belongs to art or culture, as elsewhere, we may have a large appetite and little to feed on. Only, in the things of the mind, the appetite itself counts for so much, at least in hopeful, unobstructed youth, with the world before it. "You are the Apollo you tell us of, the northern Apollo," people were beginning to say to him, surprised from time to time by a mental purpose beyond their guesses—expressions, liftings, softly gleaming or vehement lights, in the handsome countenance of the youth, and his effective speech, as he roamed, inviting all about him to share the

honey, from music to painting, from painting to the drama, all alike florid in style, yes! and perhaps third-rate. And so far consistently throughout he had held that the centre of one's intellectual system must be understood to be in France. He had thoughts of proceeding to that country, secretly, in person, there to attain the very impress of its genius.

Meantime, its more portable flowers came to order in abundance. That the roses, so to put it, were but excellent artificial flowers, redolent only of musk, neither disproved for Carl the validity of his ideal nor for our minds the vocation of Carl himself in these matters. In art, as in all other things of the mind, again, much depends on the receiver; and the higher informing capacity, if it exist within, will mould an unpromising matter to itself, will realise itself by selection, and the preference of the better in what is bad or indifferent, asserting its prerogative under the most unlikely conditions. People had in Carl, could they have understood it, the spectacle, under those superficial braveries, of a really heroic effort of mind at a disadvantage. That *rococo* seventeenth-century French imitation of the true Renaissance, called out in Carl a boundless enthusiasm, as the Italian original had done two centuries before. He put into his reception of the æsthetic achievements of Lewis the Fourteenth what young France had felt when Francis the First brought home the great

Da Vinci and his works. It was but himself truly, after all, that he had found, so fresh and real, among those artificial roses.

He was thrown the more upon such outward and sensuous products of mind—architecture, pottery, presently on music—because for him, with so large intellectual capacity, there was, to speak properly, no literature in his mother-tongue. Books there were, German books, but of a dulness, a distance from the actual interests of the warm, various, coloured life around and within him, to us hardly conceivable. There was more entertainment in the natural train of his own solitary thoughts, humoured and rightly attuned by pleasant visible objects, than in all the books he had hunted through so carefully for that all-searching intellectual light, of which a passing gleam of interest gave fallacious promise here or there. And still, generously, he held to the belief, urging him to fresh endeavour, that the literature which might set heart and mind free must exist somewhere, though court librarians could not say where. In search for it he spent many days in those old book-closets where he had lighted on the Latin ode of Conrad Celtes. Was German literature always to remain no more than a kind of penal apparatus for the teasing of the brain? Oh! for a literature set free, conterminous with the interests of life itself.

In music, it might be thought, Germany had

already vindicated its spiritual liberty. One and another of those North-german towns were already aware of the youthful Sebastian Bach. The first notes had been heard of a music not borrowed from France, but flowing, as naturally as springs from their sources, out of the ever musical soul of Germany itself. And the Duke Carl was a sincere lover of music, himself playing melodiously on the violin to a delighted court. That new Germany of the spirit would be builded, perhaps, to the sound of music. In those other artistic enthusiasms, as the prophet of the French drama or the architectural taste of Lewis the Fourteenth, he had contributed himself generously, helping out with his own good-faith the inadequacy of their appeal. Music alone hitherto had really helped *him*, and taken him out of himself. To music, instinctively, more and more he was dedicate ; and in his desire to refine and organise the court music, from which, by leave of absence to official performers enjoying their salaries at a distance, many parts had literally fallen away, like the favourite notes of a worn-out spinet, he was ably seconded by a devoted youth, the deputy organist of the grand-ducal chapel. A member of the Roman Church amid a people chiefly of the Reformed religion, Duke Carl would creep sometimes into the curtained court pew of the Lutheran Church, to which he had presented its massive golden crucifix, to listen to the *chorales*, the execution of which he

had managed to time to his liking, relishing, he could hardly explain why, those passages of a pleasantly monotonous and, as it might seem, unending melody—which certainly never came to what could rightly be called an ending here on earth ; and having also a sympathy with the cheerful genius of Dr. Martin Luther, with his good tunes, and that ringing laughter which sent dull goblins flitting.

At this time, then, his mind ran eagerly for awhile on the project of some musical and dramatic development of a fancy suggested by that old Latin poem of Conrad Celtes—the hyperborean Apollo, sojourning, in the revolutions of time, in the sluggish north for a season, yet Apollo still, prompting art, music, poetry, and the philosophy which interprets man's life, making a sort of intercalary day amid the natural darkness ; not meridian day, of course, but a soft derivative daylight, good enough for us. It would be necessarily a mystic piece, abounding in fine touches, suggestions, innuendoes. His vague proposal was met half-way by the very practical executant power of his friend or servant, the deputy organist, already pondering, with just a satiric flavour (suppressible in actual performance, if the time for that should ever come) a musical work on Duke Carl himself; *Balder, an Interlude.* He was contented to re-cast and enlarge the part of the northern god of light, with a now wholly serious intention. But still,

the near, the real and familiar, gave precision to, or actually superseded, the distant and the ideal. The soul of the music was but a transfusion from the fantastic but so interesting creature close at hand. And Carl was certainly true to his proposed part in that he gladdened others by an intellectual radiance which had ceased to mean warmth or animation for himself. For him the light was still to seek in France, in Italy, above all in old Greece, amid the precious things which might yet be lurking there unknown, in art, in poetry, perhaps in very life, till Prince Fortunate should come.

Yes! it was thither, to Greece, that his thoughts were turned during those romantic classical musings while the opera was made ready. That, in due time, was presented, with sufficient success. Meantime, his purpose was grown definite to visit that original country of the Muses, from which the pleasant things of Italy had been but derivative; to brave the difficulties in the way of leaving home at all, the difficulties also of access to Greece, in the present condition of the country.

At times the fancy came that he must really belong by descent to a southern race, that a physical cause might lie beneath this strange restlessness, like the imperfect reminiscence of something that had passed in earlier life. The aged ministers of heraldry were set to work (actually prolonging their days by an unex-

pected revival of interest in their too well-worn function) at the search for some obscure rivulet of Greek descent—later Byzantine Greek, perhaps,—in the Rosenmold genealogy. No ! with a hundred quarterings, they were as indigenous, incorruptible heraldry reasserted, as the old yew-trees asquat on the heath.

And meantime those dreams of remote and probably adventurous travel lent the youth, still so healthy of body, a wing for more distant expeditions than he had ever yet inclined to, among his own wholesome German woodlands. In long rambles, afoot or on horseback, by day and night, he flung himself, for the resettling of his sanity, on the cheerful influences of their simple imagery ; the hawks, as if asleep on the air below him ; the bleached crags, evoked by late sunset among the dark oaks ; the water-wheels, with their pleasant murmur, in the foldings of the hillside.

Clouds came across his heaven, little sudden clouds, like those which in this northern latitude, where summer is at best but a flighty visitor, chill out the heart, though but for a few minutes at a time, of the warmest afternoon. He had fits of the gloom of other people—their dull passage through and exit from the world, the thread-bare incidents of their lives, their dismal funerals —which, unless he drove them away immediately by strenuous exercise, settled into a gloom more properly his own. Yet at such times

outward things also would seem to concur unkindly in deepening the mental shadow about him, almost as if there were indeed animation in the natural world, elfin spirits in those inaccessible hillsides and dark ravines, as old German poetry pretended, cheerfully assistant sometimes, but for the most part troublesome, to their human kindred. Of late these fits had come somewhat more frequently, and had continued. Often it was a weary, deflowered face that his favourite mirrors reflected. Yes! people were prosaic, and their lives threadbare:—all but himself and organist Max, perhaps, and Fritz the treble-singer. In return, the people in actual contact with him thought him a little mad, though still ready to flatter his madness, as he could detect. Alone with the doating old grandfather in their stiff, distant, alien world of etiquette, he felt surrounded by flatterers, and would fain have tested the sincerity even of Max, and Fritz who said, echoing the words of the other, "Yourself, Sire, are the Apollo of Germany!"

It was his desire to test the sincerity of the people about him, and unveil flatterers, which in the first instance suggested a trick he played upon the court, upon all Europe. In that complex but wholly Teutonic genealogy lately under research, lay a much-prized thread of descent from the fifth Emperor Charles, and Carl, under direction, read with much readiness to be im-

pressed all that was attainable concerning the great ancestor, finding there in truth little enough to reward his pains. One hint he took, however. He determined to assist at his own obsequies.

That he might in this way facilitate that much-desired journey occurred to him almost at once as an accessory motive, and in a little while definite motives were engrossed in the dramatic interest, the pleasing gloom, the curiosity, of the thing itself. Certainly, amid the living world in Germany, especially in old, sleepy Rosenmold, death made great parade of itself. Youth even, in its sentimental mood, was ready to indulge in the luxury of decay, and amuse itself with fancies of the tomb ; as in periods of decadence or suspended progress, when the world seems to nap for a time, artifices for the arrest or disguise of old age are adopted as a fashion, and become the fopperies of the young. The whole body of Carl's relations, saving the drowsy old grandfather, already lay buried beneath their expansive heraldries : at times the whole world almost seemed buried thus—made and re-made of the dead—its entire fabric of politics, of art, of custom, being essentially heraldic "achievements," dead men's mementoes such as those. You see he was a sceptical young man, and his kinsmen dead and gone had passed certainly, in his imaginations of them, into no other world, save, perhaps, into some stiffer, slower, sleepier,

and more pompous phase of ceremony—the last degree of court etiquette—as they lay there in the great, low-pitched, grand-ducal vault, in their coffins, dusted once a year for All Souls' Day, when the court officials descended thither, and Mass for the dead was sung, amid an array of dropping crape and cobwebs. The lad, with his full red lips and open blue eyes, coming as with a great cup in his hands to life's feast, revolted from the like of that, as from suffocation. And still the suggestion of it was everywhere. In the garish afternoon, up to the wholesome heights of the Heiligenberg suddenly from one of the villages of the plain came the grinding death-knell. It seemed to come out of the ugly grave itself, and enjoyment was dead. On his way homeward sadly, an hour later, he enters by chance the open door of a village church, half buried in the tangle of its churchyard. The rude coffin is lying there of a labourer who had but a hovel to live in. The enemy dogged one's footsteps ! The young Carl seemed to be flying, not from death simply, but from assassination.

And as these thoughts sent him back in the rebounding power of youth, with renewed appetite, to life and sense, so, grown at last familiar, they gave additional purpose to his fantastic experiment. Had it not been said by a wise man that after all the offence of death was in its trappings ? Well ! he would, as far as might be, try the thing, while, presumably, a

large reversionary interest in life was still his. He would purchase his freedom, at least of those gloomy "trappings," and listen while he was spoken of as dead. The mere preparations gave pleasant proof of the devotion to him of a certain number, who entered without question into his plans. It is not difficult to mislead the world concerning what happens to those who live at the artificial distance from it of a court, with its high wall of etiquette. However the matter was managed, no one doubted, when, with a blazon of ceremonious words, the court news went forth that, after a brief illness, according to the way of his race, the hereditary Grand-duke was deceased. In momentary regret, bethinking them of the lad's taste for splendour, those to whom the arrangement of such matters belonged (the grandfather now sinking deeper into bare quiescence) backed by the popular wish, determined to give him a funeral with even more than grand-ducal measure of lugubrious magnificence. The place of his repose was marked out for him as officiously as if it had been the delimitation of a kingdom, in the ducal burial vault, through the cobwebbed windows of which, from the garden where he played as a child, the young Duke had often peered at the faded glories of the immense coroneted coffins, the oldest shedding their velvet tatters around them. Surrounded by the whole official world of Rosenmold, arrayed for the occasion in almost

forgotten dresses of ceremony as if for a masquerade, the new coffin glided from the fragrant chapel where the *Requiem* was sung, down the broad staircase lined with peach-colour and yellow marble, into the shadows below. Carl himself, disguised as a strolling musician, had followed it across the square through a drenching rain, on which circumstance he overheard the old people congratulate the "blessed" dead within, had listened to a dirge of his own composing brought out on the great organ with much *bravura* by his friend, the new court organist, who was in the secret, and that night turned the key of the garden entrance to the vault, and peeped in upon the sleepy, painted, and bewigged young pages whose duty it would be for a certain number of days to come to watch beside their late master's couch.

And a certain number of weeks afterwards it was known that "the mad Duke" had reappeared, to the dismay of court marshals. Things might have gone hard with the youth had the strange news, at first as fantastic rumour, then as matter of solemn enquiry, lastly as ascertained fact, pleasing or otherwise, been less welcome than it was to the grandfather, too old, indeed, to sorrow deeply, but grown so decrepit as to propose that ministers should possess themselves of the person of the young Duke, proclaim him of age and regent. From those dim travels, presenting themselves to the old man, who had never been

fifty miles away from home, as almost lunar in their audacity, he would come back—come back "in time," he murmured faintly, eager to feel that youthful, animating life on the stir about him once more.

Carl himself, now the thing was over, greatly relishing its satiric elements, must be forgiven the trick of the burial and his still greater enormity in coming to life again. And then, duke or no duke, it was understood that he willed that things should in no case be precisely as they had been. He would never again be quite so near people's lives as in the past—a fitful, intermittent visitor—almost as if he had been properly dead; the empty coffin remaining as a kind of symbolical "coronation incident," setting forth his future relations to his subjects. Of all those who believed him dead one human creature only, save the grandfather, had sincerely sorrowed for him; a woman, in tears as the funeral train passed by, with whom he had sympathetically discussed his own merits. Till then he had forgotten the incident which had exhibited him to her as the very genius of goodness and strength; how, one day, driving with her country produce into the market, and, embarrassed by the crowd, she had broken one of a hundred little police rules, whereupon the officers were about to carry her away to be fined, or worse, amid the jeers of the bystanders, always ready to deal hardly with "the gipsy," at which precise

moment the tall Duke Carl, like the flash of a trusty sword, had leapt from the palace stair and caused her to pass on in peace. She had half detected him through his disguise; in due time news of his reappearance had been ceremoniously carried to her in her little cottage, and the remembrance of her hung about him not ungratefully, as he went with delight upon his way.

The first long stage of his journey over, in headlong flight night and day, he found himself one summer morning under the heat of what seemed a southern sun, at last really at large on the Bergstrasse, with the rich plain of the Palatinate on his left hand; on the right hand vineyards, seen now for the first time, sloping up into the crisp beeches of the Odenwald. By Weinheim only an empty tower remained of the Castle of Windeck. He lay for the night in the great whitewashed guest-chamber of the Capuchin convent.

The national rivers, like the national woods, have a family likeness: the Main, the Lahn, the Moselle, the Neckar, the Rhine. By help of such accommodation as chance afforded, partly on the stream itself, partly along the banks, he pursued the leisurely winding course of one of the prettiest of these, tarrying for awhile in the towns, grey, white, or red, which came in his way, tasting their delightful native "little" wines, peeping into their old overloaded churches, inspecting the church furniture, or trying the

organs. For three nights he slept, warm and dry, on the hay stored in a deserted cloister, and, attracted into the neighbouring minster for a snatch of church music, narrowly escaped detection. By miraculous chance the grimmest lord of Rosenmold was there within, recognised the youth and his companions—visitors naturally conspicuous, amid the crowd of peasants around them—and for some hours was upon their traces. After unclean town streets the country air was a perfume by contrast, or actually scented with pinewoods. One seemed to breathe with it fancies of the woods, the hills, and water—of a sort of souls in the landscape, but cheerful and genial now, happy souls! A distant group of pines on the verge of a great upland awoke a violent desire to be there—seemed to challenge one to proceed thither. Was their infinite view thence? It was like an outpost of some far-off fancy land, a pledge of the reality of such. Above Cassel, the airy hills curved in one black outline against a glowing sky, pregnant, one could fancy, with weird forms, which might be at their old *diableries* again on those remote places ere night was quite come there. At last in the streets, the hundred churches, of Cologne, he feels something of a "Gothic" enthusiasm, and all a German's enthusiasm for the Rhine.

Through the length and breadth of the Rhine country the vintage was begun. The red ruins on the heights, the white-walled villages, white

Saint Nepomuc upon the bridges, were but isolated high notes of contrast in a landscape, sleepy and indistinct under the flood of sunshine, with a headiness in it like that of must, of the new wine. The noise of the vineyards came through the lovely haze, still, at times, with the sharp sound of a bell—death-bell, perhaps, or only a crazy summons to the vintagers. And amid those broad, willowy reaches of the Rhine at length, from Bingen to Mannheim, where the brown hills wander into airy, blue distance, like a little picture of paradise, he felt that France was at hand. Before him lay the road thither, easy and straight.—That well of light so close! But, unexpectedly, the capricious incidence of his own humour with the opportunity did not suggest, as he would have wagered it must, "Go, drink at once!" Was it that France had come to be of no account at all, in comparison of Italy, of Greece? or that, as he passed over the German land, the conviction had come, "For you, France, Italy, Hellas, is here!"—that some recognition of the untried spiritual possibilities of meek Germany had for Carl transferred the ideal land out of space beyond the Alps or the Rhine, into future time, whither he must be the leader? A little chilly of humour, in spite of his manly strength, he was journeying partly in search of physical heat. To-day certainly, in this great vineyard, physical heat was about him in measure sufficient, at least for

a German constitution. Might it be not otherwise with the imaginative, the intellectual, heat and light; the real need being that of an interpreter—Apollo, illuminant rather as the revealer than as the bringer of light? With large belief that the *Éclaircissement*, the *Aufklärung* (he had already found the name for the thing) would indeed come, he had been in much bewilderment whence and how. Here, he began to see that it could be in no other way than by action of informing thought upon the vast accumulated material of which Germany was in possession: art, poetry, fiction, an entire imaginative world, following reasonably upon a deeper understanding of the past, of nature, of one's self—an understanding of all beside through the knowledge of one's self. To understand, would be the indispensable first step towards the enlargement of the great past, of one's little present, by criticism, by imagination. Then, the imprisoned souls of nature would speak as of old. The Middle Age, in Germany, where the past has had such generous reprisals, never far from us, would reassert its mystic spell, for the better understanding of our Raffaelle. The spirits of distant Hellas would reawake in the men and women of little German towns. Distant times, the most alien thoughts, would come near together, as elements in a great historic symphony. A kind of ardent, new patriotism awoke in him, sensitive for the first time at the words *national*

poesy, *national* art and literature, *German* philosophy. To the resources of the past, of himself, of what was possible for German mind, more and more his mind opens as he goes on his way. A free, open space had been determined, which something now to be created, created by him, must occupy. "Only," he thought, "if I had coadjutors! If these thoughts would awake in but one other mind!"

At Strasbourg, with its mountainous goblin houses, nine stories high, grouped snugly, in the midst of that inclement plain, like a great stork's nest around the romantic red steeple of its cathedral, Duke Carl became fairly captive to the Middle Age. Tarrying there week after week he worked hard, but (without a ray of light from others) in one long mistake, at the chronology and history of the coloured windows. Antiquity's very self seemed expressed there, on the visionary images of king or patriarch, in the deeply incised marks of character, the hoary hair, the massive proportions, telling of a length of years beyond what is lived now. Surely, past ages, could one get at the historic soul of them, were not dead but living, rich in company, for the entertainment, the expansion, of the present: and Duke Carl was still without suspicion of the cynic afterthought that such historic soul was but an arbitrary substitution, a generous loan of one's self.

The mystic soul of Nature laid hold on him

next, saying, "Come! understand, interpret me!" He was awakened one morning by the jingle of sledge-bells along the street beneath his windows. Winter had descended betimes from the mountains: the pale Rhine below the bridge of boats on the long way to Kehl was swollen with ice, and for the first time he realised that Switzerland was at hand. On a sudden he was captive to the enthusiasm of the mountains, and hastened along the valley of the Rhine by Alt Breisach and Basle, unrepelled by a thousand difficulties, to Swiss farmhouses and lonely villages, solemn still, and untouched by strangers. At Grindelwald, sleeping at last in the close neighbourhood of the greater Alps, he had the sense of an overbrooding presence, of some strange new companions around him. Here one might yield one's self to the unalterable imaginative appeal of the elements in their highest force and simplicity—light, air, water, earth. On very early spring days a mantle was suddenly lifted; the Alps were an apex of natural glory, towards which, in broadening spaces of light, the whole of Europe sloped upwards. Through them, on the right hand, as he journeyed on, were the doorways to Italy, to Como or Venice, from yonder peak Italy's self was visible!—as, on the left hand, in the South-german towns, in a high-toned, artistic fineness, in the dainty, flowered ironwork for instance, the overflow of Italian genius was traceable. These things

presented themselves at last only to remind him that, in a new intellectual hope, he was already on his way home. Straight through life, straight through nature and man, with one's own self-knowledge as a light thereon, not by way of the geographical Italy or Greece, lay the road to the new Hellas, to be realised now as the outcome of home-born German genius. At times, in that early fine weather, looking now not southwards, but towards Germany, he seemed to trace the outspread of a faint, not wholly natural, aurora over the dark northern country. And it was in an actual sunrise that the news came which finally put him on the directest road homewards. One hardly dared breathe in the rapid uprise of all-embracing light which seemed like the intellectual rising of the Fatherland, when up the straggling path to his high beech-grown summit (was one safe nowhere?) protesting over the roughness of the way, came the too familiar voices (*ennui* itself made audible) of certain high functionaries of Rosenmold, come to claim their new sovereign, close upon the runaway.

Bringing news of the old Duke's decease! With a real grief at his heart, he hastened now over the ground which lay between him and the bed of death, still trying, at quieter intervals, to snatch profit by the way; peeping, at the most unlikely hours, on the objects of his curiosity, waiting for a glimpse of dawn through glowing

church windows, penetrating into old church treasuries by candle-light, taxing the old courtiers to pant up, for "the view," to this or that conspicuous point in the world of hilly woodland. From one such at last, in spite of everything with pleasure to Carl, old Rosenmold was visible—the attic windows of the Residence, the storks on the chimneys, the green copper roofs baking in the long, dry German summer. The homeliness of true old Germany! He too felt it, and yearned towards his home.

And the "beggar-maid" was there. Thoughts of her had haunted his mind all the journey through, as he was aware, not unpleased, graciously overflowing towards any creature he found dependent upon him. The mere fact that she was awaiting him, at his disposition, meekly, and as though through his long absence she had never quitted the spot on which he had said farewell, touched his fancy, and on a sudden concentrated his wavering preference into a practical decision. "King Cophetua" would be hers. And his goodwill sunned her wild-grown beauty into majesty, into a kind of queenly richness. There was natural majesty in the heavy waves of golden hair folded closely above the neck, built a little massively; and she looked kind, beseeching also, capable of sorrow. She was like clear sunny weather, with bluebells and the green leaves, between rainy days, and seemed to embody *Die Ruh auf dem Gipfel*—all

the restful hours he had spent of late in the wood-sides and on the hilltops. One June day, on which she seemed to have withdrawn into herself all the tokens of summer, brought decision to our lover of artificial roses, who had cared so little hitherto for the like of her. Grand-duke perforce, he would make her his wife, and had already re-assured her with lively mockery of his horrified ministers. "Go straight to life!" said his new poetic code; and here was the opportunity;—here, also, the real "adventure," in comparison of which his previous efforts that way seemed childish theatricalities, fit only to cheat a little the profound *ennui* of actual life. In a hundred stolen interviews she taught the hitherto indifferent youth the art of love.

Duke Carl had effected arrangements for his marriage, secret, but complete and soon to be made public. Long since he had cast complacent eyes on a strange architectural relic, an old grange or hunting-lodge on the heath, with he could hardly have defined what charm of remoteness and old romance. Popular belief amused itself with reports of the wizard who inhabited or haunted the place, his fantastic treasures, his immense age. His windows might be seen glittering afar on stormy nights, with a blaze of golden ornaments, said the more adventurous loiterer. It was not because he was suspicious still, but in a kind of wanton-

ness of affection, and as if by way of giving yet greater zest to the luxury of their mutual trust that Duke Carl added to his announcement of the purposed place and time of the event a pretended test of the girl's devotion. He tells her the story of the aged wizard, meagre and wan, to whom she must find her way alone for the purpose of asking a question all-important to himself. The fierce old man will try to escape with terrible threats, will turn, or half turn, into repulsive animals. She must cling the faster ; at last the spell will be broken ; he will yield, he will become a youth once more, and give the desired answer.

The girl, otherwise so self-denying, and still modestly anxious for a private union, not to shame his high position in the world, had wished for one thing at least—to be loved amid the splendours habitual to him. Duke Carl sends to the old lodge his choicest personal possessions. For many days the public is aware of something on hand ; a few get delightful glimpses of the treasures on their way to "the place on the heath." Was he preparing against contingencies, should the great army, soon to pass through these parts, not leave the country as innocently as might be desired ?

The short grey day seemed a long one to those who, for various reasons, were waiting anxiously for the darkness ; the court people fretful and on their mettle, the townsfolk sus-

picious, Duke Carl full of amorous longing. At her distant cottage beyond the hills, Gretchen kept herself ready for the trial. It was expected that certain great military officers would arrive that night, commanders of a victorious host making its way across Northern Germany, with no great respect for the rights of neutral territory, often dealing with life and property too rudely to find the coveted treasure. It was but one episode in a cruel war. Duke Carl did not wait for the grandly illuminated supper prepared for their reception. Events precipitated themselves. Those officers came as practically victorious occupants, sheltering themselves for the night in the luxurious rooms of the great palace. The army was in fact in motion close behind its leaders, who (Gretchen warm and happy in the arms, not of the aged wizard, but of the youthful lover) are discussing terms for the final absorption of the duchy with those traitorous old councillors. At their delicate supper Duke Carl amuses his companion with caricature, amid cries of cheerful laughter, of the sleepy courtiers entertaining their martial guests in all their pedantic politeness, like people in some farcical dream. A priest, and certain chosen friends to witness the marriage, were to come ere nightfall to the grange. The lovers heard, as they thought, the sound of distant thunder. The hours passed as they waited, and what came at last was not the priest with

his companions. Could they have been detained by the storm? Duke Carl gently re-assures the girl—bids her believe in him, and wait. But through the wind, grown to tempest, beyond the sound of the violent thunder—louder than any possible thunder—nearer and nearer comes the storm of the victorious army, like some disturbance of the earth itself, as they flee into the tumult, out of the intolerable confinement and suspense, dead-set upon them.

The *Enlightening*, the *Aufklärung*, according to the aspiration of Duke Carl, was effected by other hands; Lessing and Herder, brilliant precursors of the age of genius which centered in Goethe, coming well within the natural limits of Carl's lifetime. As precursors Goethe gratefully recognised them, and understood that there had been a thousand others, looking forward to a new era in German literature with the desire which is in some sort a "forecast of capacity," awakening each other to the permanent reality of a poetic ideal in human life, slowly forming that public consciousness to which Goethe actually addressed himself. It is their aspirations I have tried to embody in the portrait of Carl.

A hard winter had covered the Main with a firm footing of ice. The liveliest social intercourse was quickened thereon. I was unfailing from early morning onwards; and, being lightly clad, found myself, when my mother drove up later

to look on, fairly frozen. My mother sat in the carriage, quite stately in her furred cloak of red velvet, fastened on the breast with thick gold cord and tassels.

"Dear mother," I said, on the spur of the moment, "give me your furs, I am frozen."

She was equally ready. In a moment I had on the cloak. Falling below the knee, with its rich trimming of sables, and enriched with gold, it became me excellently. So clad I made my way up and down with a cheerful heart.

That was Goethe, perhaps fifty years later. His mother also related the incident to Bettina Brentano;—"There, skated my son, like an arrow among the groups. Away he went over the ice like a son of the gods. Anything so beautiful is not to be seen now. I clapped my hands for joy. Never shall I forget him as he darted out from one arch of the bridge, and in again under the other, the wind carrying the train behind him as he flew." In that amiable figure I seem to see the fulfilment of the *Resurgam* on Carl's empty coffin—the aspiring soul of Carl himself, in freedom and effective, at last.

Printed by R. & R. Clark, Limited, *Edinburgh.*

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